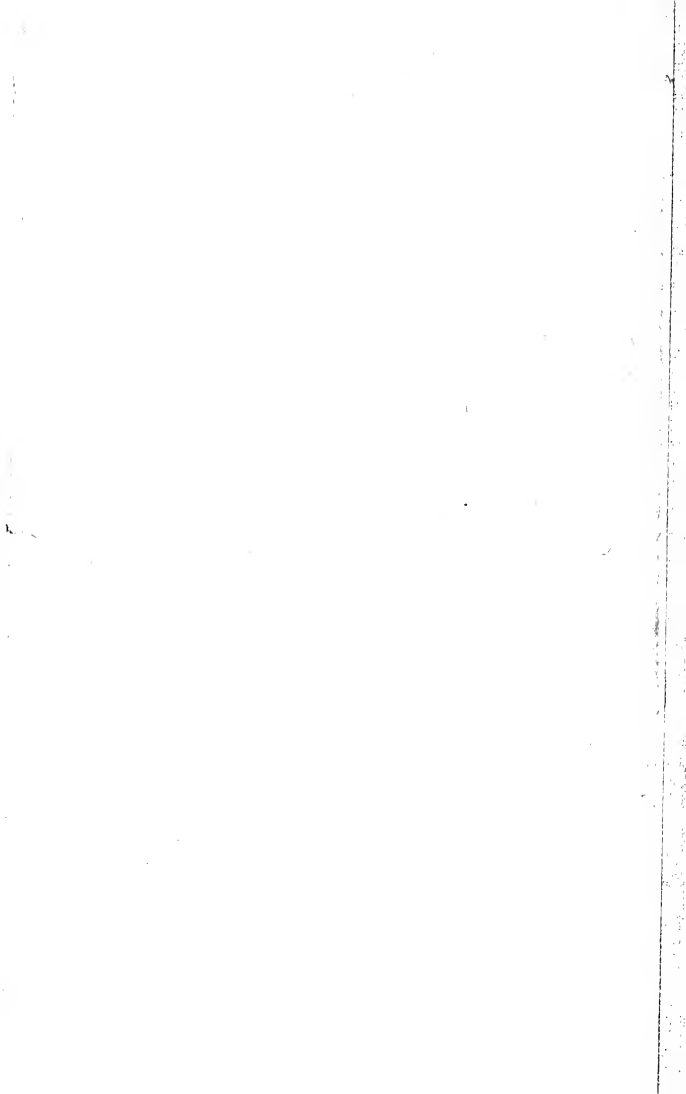


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Margaret B White

1872

1872



# The Lenten Fast.



THE

History, Object, and Proper Observance

OF THE

HOLY SEASON OF LENT.

BY THE

RT. REV. WM. INGRAHAM KIP, D. D.,

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HOLIDAYS IN ROME," "THE EARLY JESUIT MISSIONS IN NORTH  
AMERICA," "THE EARLY CONFLICTS OF  
CHRISTIANITY," ETC.

—"The world is waxing strong,  
The day is hot, the night is long,  
And therefore do I fast."

*Rev. F. W. Erbert.*

"Let us pray in the Church, with the Church, and for the Church."

*D. Mart. Luther, Colloq. Mens., ch. xx.*

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

WILLIAM HEATHCOTE DELANCEY, D. D., LL. D.,

BISHOP OF WESTERN NEW YORK,

AS A SLIGHT TESTIMONY OF RESPECT AND

AFFECTIONATE REGARD,

BY

**The Author.**

NEW YORK:

WILLIAM HEATHCOTE DELANCEY,

1870.

O every where we find our suffering God,  
    And where He trod  
May set our steps: the Cross on Calvary  
    Uplifted high  
Beams on the martyr host; a beacon light  
    In open fight.

To the still wrestlings of the lonely heart  
    He doth impart  
The virtue of his midnight agony,  
    When none was nigh,  
Save God and one good angel, to assuage  
    The tempest's rage.

Mortal! if life smiles on thee, and thou find  
    Ali to thy mind,  
Think, who did once from Heaven to Hell descend  
    Thee to befriend:  
So shalt thou dare forego, at His dear call,  
    Thy best, thine all.

*Keble.*

## PREFACE.

---

For some years past each return of Lent has been, we believe, regarded with additional interest. Many who were not trained up within the pale of the Church, are looking to her fold as a refuge more fixed and stable than any they can find elsewhere. They of course eagerly inquire into the History, Object, and Proper Observance of the Holy Seasons which are set forth in her Calendar. Among those, too, who have been educated to attend her services, there seems to be a growing appreciation of their beauty, and a wish to know more of their origin. They appear to be turning away from the empty, boastful professions of this age of novelties, and to be more inclined to adopt as a settled princi-

ple, that golden decision of the Council of Nice,  
*Εδη αρχαία κρατῆτω*, **LET ANCIENT USAGES PREVAIL.**

In this state of things, the writer has frequently sought — but without success — for something, which in a small compass might contain the necessary information with respect to the Lenten Fast. He could only find, a few pages by one author — a sermon by another — or perhaps some brief tracts, which, although excellent in themselves, did not attempt to discuss the whole subject. Having waited therefore for several years in vain, in the hope that the desired work would be furnished by some one better able to do it justice, he has at length ventured himself to undertake the task.

After the following pages were prepared for the press, there was accidentally brought to his notice, a treatise by Dr. Gunning (afterwards Bishop of Chichester), entitled, “the Paschal or Lenten Fast,” which fills a quarto volume of between five and six hundred pages, published about the year 1670. Its size however, together with the style in which it is written, would render it at the present

day useless to any but the theologian or the scholar. The author has also confined his attention principally to one single point, owing to the circumstances under which he wrote. The work was prepared after the Restoration, when in consequence of the rule of the Puritans for so many years in England, the observance of Lent had been almost entirely discontinued. The object of Dr. Gunning is therefore, to revive in the minds of men a reverence for this ancient season by proving its Apostolical authority; and the argument he presents is rendered most conclusive by extracts from every prominent writer who treats of the subject during the first seven centuries of the Church. It is evident however that this truth, if sustained by quotations from the first three centuries, is as well established as if the testimony of the remaining four was added. The present writer found therefore, that even if he had met with this treatise at an earlier period, from its being thus narrowed down to a single topic, it would have afforded him but little assistance. He mentions it however in this place, as

it is the only work with which he is acquainted devoted to this subject, and because he was happy to find in its numerous quotations, a full confirmation of the statement he had made with regard to the origin of the Lenten Fast.

It would of course have been easy, after once commencing the investigation, to have entered more deeply into the subject and expanded this volume to twice its present size by multiplying quotations from the early writers. In refraining from doing so, and in turning aside from many tempting paths of historical inquiry which opened before him, the writer (although acting contrary to the opinion of some of his friends), has been influenced by the consideration, that to have yielded, would entirely have changed the character of the work. It is intended, not for the clergy (for they must be professionally familiar with all it contains), but for those among the laity whose daily avocations prevent them from searching the early records of the Church, and to whom information conveyed in this form is sometimes acceptable and useful. The object

has therefore been, to quote from the ancient Fathers, merely enough to sustain and illustrate the different points brought forward.

It was for a similar reason that advantage was taken of the subject of Easter Even, to introduce a discussion of the Intermediate state. Those arguments we already have, able as they are, seem rather too controversial and theological in their character to be adapted to general readers. An attempt has therefore been made, to present this important subject in a more simple and popular form. Perhaps exception may be taken by some, to the adoption of Bishop Horsley's rendering of 1 Peter, iii. 19, 20. If so, the writer can only say, that some years ago he himself thought differently, but after frequently studying this difficult point with all the help he could derive from the learned labors of others, he was finally obliged to settle down upon this interpretation, as giving the most natural explanation of the passage. It is the one adopted by Dr. Bloomfield and other eminent Biblical critics of the day. If, however, this passage

should be entirely withdrawn from the argument, the loss would not materially weaken it. There is, even without it, abundant Scripture evidence to prove the doctrine.

In conclusion then the writer would say, that it is with unfeigned diffidence he commits this little volume to the press. Occupied with the engrossing cares of a parish, he has been obliged to prepare these pages almost entirely after the regular duties of the day were over, at night, and in times redeemed from sleep. Yet while engaged in the work, he has felt that such silent hours, when the noise and din of the busy city around had subsided into quietness, seemed an appropriate season in which to turn over those writings, bequeathed to us by the ages of a dim antiquity, and which we may well style—in Milton's eloquent language—"the precious life-blood of so many master spirits, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." Their words, coming down through the mist and haziness of fifteen centuries, appeared to be gifted with a more touching emphasis when read in



that still and solemn time, while the outward world, wrapped in slumber, gave no token of existence. To him therefore this labor has already brought its own reward. It has deepened his love and reverence for the Church at whose altars he is permitted to minister, and whose services he has here endeavored to illustrate. It has taught him to realize more fully than ever before, the beauty of her ancient ritual, in which the solemnities of religion are performed—to use the words of Edmund Burke—“with modest splendor, with unassuming state, with mild majesty, and sober pomp.”

If then the perusal of this little work should strengthen these feelings in the mind of any member of our Holy Apostolic Church, or awaken within one single soul which in uncertainty is “sounding on its dim and perilous way,” the wish to turn to her as an Ark of safety, the writer will be most richly recompensed for all that he has done. If it can not thus aid the cause of truth and holiness, let it be like “the arrow shot into the air, which strikes no mark, creates

no noise, leaves no track behind it, and is discovered after a little space, lying idly on the ground." But he hopes that this humble effort will not prove entirely in vain, and sends it forth therefore with the earnest prayer, that in some way it may be permitted to advance the glory of that Lord, whose blessed Passion the Church would solemnly commemorate on earth, while in Heaven a remembrance of its benefits will through all eternity furnish the theme for her noblest, loftiest anthem.

ASH WEDNESDAY, MDCCCXLIII.

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O LORD, WHO FOR OUR SAKE DIDST FAST FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS; GIVE US GRACE TO USE SUCH ABSTINENCE, THAT OUR FLESH BEING SUBDUED TO THE SPIRIT, WE MAY EVER OBEY THY GODLY MOTIONS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUE HOLINESS, TO THY HONOR AND GLORY, WHO LIVEST AND REIGNEST WITH THE FATHER AND THE HOLY GHOST, ONE GOD, WORLD WITHOUT END.

AMEN.

*Collect for the First Sunday in Lent.*

## The Object of the Primitive Church in Instituting the Holy Season of Lent.

---

Welcome, dear feast of Lent! who loves not thee,  
He loves not temperance, or authority,  
But is composed of passion.

The Scriptures bid us *fast*; the Church says *now*;  
Give to thy mother, what thou wouldst allow  
To every corporation.

“*The Church*,” by Herbert.



## I.

### Object of the Primitive Church in Instituting the Holy Season of Lent.

---

At length the changing months have brought us to another division of our ecclesiastical year. We have again entered on that solemn season, in which the Church commands her children to “turn unto the Lord with all their hearts, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning,”<sup>a</sup> — “worthily lamenting their sins, and acknowledging their wretchedness, that they may obtain of Him who is the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through

*a. Passage appointed for the Epistle for Ash-Wednesday.*

Jesus Christ, their Lord."<sup>b</sup> Her services now give utterance to the language of sorrow and abasement, as we prepare for the solemn commemoration of our Lord's agony and death. It is interesting therefore to look back to the records of the early Church in her holiest day, that as we see the origin of this season, and the object for which it was appointed, we may be enabled to decide, whether we are so observing it, that it shall answer for us its high and important purposes.

The fast of Lent (a Saxon word, signifying *the Spring*) is of forty days continuance, during the six weeks which precede Easter. As however the Sundays are Festivals, and must therefore be excepted, only thirty-six days are left. To make up this deficiency, four days are added at the beginning, commencing with Ash-Wednesday,<sup>c</sup> which derives its name from the ashes which in the ancient Church were at this time thrown upon the penitents, whose sins had debarred them from a participation in her servi-

*b. Collect for Ash-Wednesday.*

*c.* It is uncertain by whom this addition was made. Most writers however ascribe it to Gregory the Great (see Bingham's *Orig. Eccles.* lib. xxi., ch. 1, section 5).



ces. "On the first day of Lent," says Gratian, in describing this ceremony, "the penitents were to present themselves before the Bishop, clothed with sack-cloth, with naked feet, and eyes turned to the ground; and this was to be done in the presence of the principal of the Clergy of the Diocese, who were to judge of the sincerity of their repentance. These introduced them into the Church, where the Bishop, all in tears, and the rest of the Clergy, repeated the seven penitential psalms. Then, rising from prayers, they threw ashes upon them, and covered their heads with sack-cloth; and then with mournful sighs declared to them, that as Adam was thrown out of Paradise, so they must be thrown out of the Church. Then the Bishop commanded the officers to turn them from the Church doors."<sup>d</sup> Severe indeed this discipline may seem; yet in an age when the minds of men were reached only by striking appeals to the outward senses, we can not tell how much these ceremonies may have availed to keep alive the purity of the Church, and to impress upon the careless multitude, the value of admission to her services.

d. *Wheatly on Common Prayer*, p.233.

An allusion to this ancient form is still preserved in the “COMMUNION, or denouncing of God’s anger and judgment against sinners,” which in the service of the Church of England is commanded “to be used on the first day of Lent.” After Litany the Priest is directed to say :

“Brethren, in the Primitive Church there was a godly discipline, that, at the beginning of Lent, such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance, and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord ; and that others, admonished by their example, might be the more afraid to offend.

Instead whereof (until the said discipline may be restored again, which is much to be wished), it is thought good, that at this time (in the presence of you all) should be read the general sentences of God’s cursing against impenitent sinners, gathered out of the seven and twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy and other places of Scripture ; and that ye shall answer to every sentence, *Amen* ; To the intent that, being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners, ye may the rather be moved to earnest and true repentance ; and may walk more wari-

ly in these dangerous days ; fleeing from such vices, for which ye affirm with your own mouths, the curse of God to be due.”

Then follow the anathemas, to which the people respond. This form has been omitted in the Liturgy of the Church in America, with the exception of the three concluding prayers, which on Ash-Wednesday are directed “to be said immediately before the general thanksgiving.”

All record of the precise time in which this season first originated, is lost in the dim obscurity of the early ages of the Church. We may therefore speak of its services, in the words with which the ancient tragic poet represents Antigone as defending those sacred precepts of her faith, which had come down upon the traditions of a remote antiquity:

Οὐ γὰρ τι νῦν γε καὶ χθες ἀλλ’ ἄσι ποτε  
ζητᾷντα κόυδεις οἶδεν ἕξ ὅτου φάνη.<sup>e</sup>

The Lenten Fast is however frequently referred to by writers of primitive days as an established

<sup>e</sup> Not now, nor yesterday, but always thus

These have endured, their ancient source unknown.

*Soph. Antigone*, 462.

and well known custom, which had been sanctioned by Apostolical authority. The probability is, that even from the first—from the time in which “the Bridegroom was taken away”—His followers thus in sorrow kept the anniversary of His Passion, although the duration of this season, and the rules by which its observance was regulated, may not have been definitely settled until the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles. Philo, who was cotemporary with the early disciples, and is even said “to have had familiar conversation with Peter at Rome, whilst he was proclaiming the Gospel to the inhabitants of that city,”<sup>v</sup> refers to this season in his description of the Christians of Alexandria, who were converted by St. Mark. “This author,”—says Eusebius, in his history composed about A. D. 324—“has accurately described and stated in his writings, the exercises performed by them,” (i. e. the Christians of Alexandria in the days of St. Mark), “which are still in vogue among us at the present day, and especially at the festival of our Savior’s passion, which we are accustomed to pass in fasting and watching, and in the study of the divine word. These

f. Eusebius’ *Eccles. Hist.*, liber ii., chap. 17, p. 66.

are the same customs that are observed by us alone at the present day, particularly *the vigils of the Great Festival*,"<sup>g</sup> meaning by this the Passion week, called by the Greek Fathers the Great Week.

It is also mentioned incidentally by Irenæus, who lived but ninety years after the death of St. John, and was trained up under the martyr Polycarp, who had himself been a disciple of that last surviving Apostle. When alluding to a difference of opinion with regard to the time in which it should be kept, he shows that the custom itself was ancient, even in his day. His words are: "This diversity existing among those that observe it, is not a matter that has just sprung up in our time, but long ago, among those before us."<sup>h</sup>

Tertullian too, who lived within one hundred years of the Apostle St. John's departure, has unwittingly as it were, recorded his testimony to the general belief of the Church in the Apostolical Authority of this season. Having erred from the faith, and embraced the heresy of the Montanists, he found the voice of the Church

g. Eusebius' *Eccles. Hist.* lib. ii, chap. 17 p. 68.

h. *Ibid.* lib. v. chap. 24, p. 210.

against him, when he endeavored to introduce the new fasts which Montanus had commanded. Thus therefore he argues against her authority, in defence of his party. "They" (i. e. the Catholic Christians) "accuse us that we observe fasts of our own, peculiar to ourselves. They object therefore unto us novelty, and prescribe against the unlawfulness of that, saying, it is either to be judged Heresy, if presuming as men, we so dogmatize, or we are to be pronounced false prophets, if we inculcate these fasts, as from the Spirit; whilst on either hand we hear them denounce an anathema against us. For as to what pertains to fast, they argue, *that there are certain days constituted by God* They surely think, *that in the Gospel those days are determined for facts, in which the Bridegroom was taken away*, and that those days only are now the legitimate days of Christian fasts, all legal and prophetical old observances being antiquated or abolished. Therefore as to other fasting, it is to be indifferent, according to every man's occasions and causes, at his own judgment, not of command." (That is, as Montanus inculcated the necessity of his fast, by pretended command from God.) "*And that thus the Apostles observed the rule of fasting*, imposing no other yoke of

certain or set fasts to be kept of all in common. And ye prescribe against us, *that the solemn times for this matter, are to be believed already constituted in the Scriptures*, or in the tradition of our Elders, and that no further observance is to be superadded, for the unlawfulness of innovation.”<sup>i</sup>

The first Christian Emperor, Constantine, immediately after the meeting of the earliest general council of the Church—that held at Nice, A. D. 325—and which was composed, to use his own words, “of all the Bishops, or the greater part of them at least, assembled together,” wrote a letter to all the Churches, on the necessity of observing Easter upon the same day. His argument is, that unless this uniformity exists, some will be rejoicing in that Festival, while others are still mourning in the fasts which precede it. “It is fit therefore”—he says—“that we should perpetuate to all future ages the celebration of this rite, *which we have kept from the first day of our Lord’s passion even to the present times.* . . .

. . . . For the Savior has bequeathed to us one festal day of our liberation, that is, *the day of His most holy passion*; and it was His

i. Tertullian *De Jejuniis*, chap. 1, 2, 13.

pleasure that His Church should be one; the members of which, although dispersed in many and various places, are yet nourished by the same Spirit, that is, by the will of God. Let the sagacity of your holiness only consider how painful and indecorous it must be, for some to be *experiencing the rigors of abstinence*, and others to be unbending their minds in convivial enjoyments on the same day; and after Easter, for some to be indulging in feasting and relaxation while others are occupied in *the observance of the prescribed fasts*.”<sup>j</sup>

To give a single reference more—and they might be multiplied to a great extent—this season is mentioned in the Apostolic Canons, a code of laws which certainly dates its authority from a very early age. “If”—says the 61st Canon—“any Bishop, Priest, Deacon, Reader, or Singer, do not keep the holy fast of Lent, forty days before Easter, or the Wednesdays and Fridays, let him be deposed, if he be not hindered by some bodily infirmity; but if he be a layman, let him be suspended from communion.”<sup>k</sup>

*j.* Euseb. *De Vit. Constantin.* lib. iii., c. 17, 18.  
Socrates, lib. i, chapter 6. Theodoret, lib. i, ch. 10.

*k.* *Patres Apos. Cotel.* vol. 1, p. 451, *edit.* 1724.



Thus, we perceive, that this custom took not its rise amidst the corruptions of the Dark Ages, but began in times of light and holiness. We received it not from the Romish Church, when it had fallen from ancient purity, but it comes down to us from Primitive days. It was sanctioned by Apostolical authority, or certainly at

These Canons have usually passed by the name of St. Clement. Bellarmin, Baronius, and others, assert them to be the genuine Canons of the Apostles. Cotelierius however observes, that the internal evidence is against this view of their antiquity (*Jud. de Canon Apos.*, vol. 1, p. 429). Hincmar, De Marca, and Beveridge give, what is the most probable account, that they were framed by the Bishops who were the disciples of the Apostles, in the end of the 2d and beginning of the 3d centuries. See Beveridge *Jud. de Can. Apos. in Cotel.*, vol. 1, p. 436. See also, Lardner's *Works*, vol. 4, p. 354. Jortin's *Rem. on Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, p. 278; Cave's *Hist. Lit.* vol. 1, p. 29. Even Mosheim acknowledges that "they exhibit the principles of discipline received in the Greek and Oriental Churches, in the 2d and 3d centuries" (*Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, p. 90, 224). We give these authorities merely to show, that in the lowest view taken of these Canons, they are good evidence of the practice of the Church at a very early age.

least by those who lived before the example and instruction of Apostles had been in any respect forgotten. The early Christians, as we have already seen stated by Tertullian, considered our Divine Master as referring to the observance of some such season, when he said: "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." At first, the time of its observance varied in different Churches and among different individuals, although all agreed in the necessity of thus commemorating, in some way, their Lord's sufferings and death. At length, however, its duration was fixed at forty days, which has since, through all the intervening centuries, continued to be the uniform custom of the Church.<sup>1</sup> The number *forty* seems

1. The question as to the length of Lent, at its first institution, is one which has caused much discussion among learned men. The Greeks called this season Τεσσαρακοστή, and the Latins *Quadragesima*, both of which words denote *forty*. But the inquiry has been, whether this applied to days or hours? By some, it was argued, that it always had been forty days. By others, that it at first extended only through forty hours, which were of entire absti-

very anciently to have been appropriated to seasons of repentance and fasting. "This quadragesimal number"—says St. Ambrose, in his 36th sermon—is not constituted of men, but consecrated from God." For this term of years were the children of Israel disciplined in the wilderness, to prepare them for the promised land. For forty days did Moses fast on the Mount—Elijah in the Wilderness—and the Ninevites, when they would avert the judgments prophesied by Jonah. It was this length of time that our Lord himself was pleased to fast, during His temptation in the desert, and from His example was this period probably fixed, "that,"—as St. Augustine says—"we might, as far as we are able, conform to Christ's practice, and suffer with Him here, that we may reign with Him hereafter."

And we may learn too from a single passage  
nence, beginning about 12 on Friday, (the time of our Savior's falling under the power of death), and continuing until Sunday morning, the time of His resurrection, and that afterwards it was extended by the Church to the same number of days. The reader will find this subject discussed in Bingham's *Orig. Eccles.*, lib. xxi., chap. 1.

in St. Basil's Second Homily on Fasting, how universal throughout the world was the attention of the early Christians to this solemn portion of the Ecclesiastical year. "In this time of Lent, there is no island nor continent of the earth, no city, nor nation, no extreme corner of the world, where the Edict of this Fast of Lent was not heard. Yea, whatsoever armies, merchants, travelers, or mariners are abroad, this fast comes unto them all, and with joy they all receive it. This composes every house, every city, and every people, in sobriety and quiet and concord. This stills the late clamors, contentions, and noises of the town. Let no one, therefore, exempt himself from the number of the fasters, in which every degree, nation and age almost of men, and all of all dignities whatsoever are engaged."

How safe then are we, in yielding our ready obedience to this regulation of the Church! How much better, to tread in the footsteps of martyrs and confessors of former times, than to set at naught all the customs which they found conducive to their spiritual benefit, and to determine — despising the wisdom of the past, and the recorded experience of eighteen centuries —

to “walk every one in the ways of his own heart!” It becomes therefore an enquiry of interest to us, gleaning from those ancient writers whose works have survived the ravages of barbarism and the waste of time, to investigate the reasons which induced the Church in Primitive days to institute this Holy Season, and then through all succeeding ages, to insist so strongly upon its observance.

The first reason was—THAT HAVING THE SUBJECT OF THEIR LORD’S SUFFERINGS THUS BROUGHT MORE VIVIDLY BEFORE THEM, THEY MIGHT BE INDUCED TO MOURN HIS LOSS WITH GREATER EARNESTNESS.

There is a tendency in the human mind, to disregard a duty, to the performance of which no specific time is allotted. Thus, if the whole year were given us, during which we were commanded at some period to meditate seriously on our Lord’s death, we should probably either neglect the obligation entirely, or, at best, fulfill it but imperfectly. It is for this reason that the early Church set apart definite times, for considering in order each of the grand doctrines of the Christian faith, as the Ecclesiastical year rolls round. And in this practice we now continue.

“ Yes, if the intensities of hope and fear  
Attract us still, and passionate exercise  
Of lofty thoughts, the way before us lies  
Distinct with signs — through which in fixed  
career,

As through a zodiac, moves the ritual year  
Of England’s Church — stupendous mysteries !  
Which, whoso travels in her bosom, eyes  
As he approaches them, with solemn cheer.”

Beautiful indeed is that arrangement of her services, which, as the months go by, brings in succession before her Children, each scene in their Lord’s eventful life, and each cardinal truth which he taught ! We celebrate with joy and gratitude the Festival of His Nativity, and afterwards follow Him on, step by step, through all the glories and the trials of His earthly pilgrimage, until amid the solemnities of Passion Week we mourn His agonies and death. Then come in meet succession, the other Festivals — that of Easter, when he triumphed over the grave — of the Ascension, when He returned to “ the glory which he had with the Father before the world was ” — and of Whitsunday, when His promise was fulfilled, that the Comforter should be given, and His Apostles, by the visible descent of the

*m.* Wordsworth’s *Eccles. Sonnets*, XV.

Holy Ghost, were prepared to be “lights to lighten the world.” Thus it is, that in a far higher and nobler sense than the Poet ever dreamed in his loftiest imaginings —

“The rolling year is full of Him.”

Acting then on this principle, and endeavoring to render the views of her members clear and distinct, how naturally did it happen, that one of the first seasons of solemn remembrance instituted by the Primitive Church, was that which commemorated her Lord’s sufferings and death, while her children were summoned in an especial manner to lament those sins which brought Him to the Cross !<sup>n</sup> “The days had come, when the

*n.* “It seemed good to the Church to fix a stated time, in which men might enter upon the great work of their repentance. And what time could have been selected with greater propriety than this ‘Lenten’ or Spring Season, when universal nature, awakening from her wintry sleep, and coming out of a state of deformity, and a course of penance, imposed for the transgression of man, her Lord and Master, is about to rise from the dead; and, putting on her garments of glory and beauty, to give us a kind of prelude to the renovation of all things? So that the

Bridegroom was taken from them, and therefore did they fast." The memory of His love and kindness was still freshly imprinted on their hearts. The history of all that He endured, came not to them, as it too often does to us, like "a thrice-told tale," to which we have listened so often that it has lost its interest. The glad news of the Gospel, bursting upon them in an age of moral degradation and darkness, had not yet ceased to thrill their hearts with joy. They had either "known Christ after the flesh," when in person he mingled with His fellow men, or at least those Apostles who sat at his sacred feet, forming his little household as He wandered through Judea; and with eager ears they listened to the recital from their lips, of all that they had heard and witnessed. Probably too, the tradition of many a deed which now is lost forever, came down to them, and contributed to heighten their estimation of that Perfect Character, from whom they were separated by but

whole creation most harmoniously accompanieth the voice of the Church, as that sweetly accordeth to the call of the Apostle, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'"—*Bishop Horne*.



a short interval of time.<sup>o</sup> How well then could they meditate upon His bitter agonies endured for them! How forcibly did they feel themselves called, once at least in each year, in an especial manner to chasten their souls by prayer and fasting, that they might thus be compelled to realize the nature of His earthly existence, who was truly “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief!”

But if this was necessary for them, how much more so is it for us! Educated from the earliest dawn of reason, to hear the story of redeeming love, and the fearful manner in which our salvation was wrought out, these themes become to us, as we before remarked, subjects too well known to excite attention. It is indispensable, therefore, that the mind should be directed and fixed upon them. And how admirably is this done by the appointed service of the church! Week after week, we are led in her prayers and

o. It is strange that the only one of these traditional sayings of our Lord, which was afterwards recorded by an inspired writer, is intended to inculcate a truth, the most difficult for human nature to learn. St. Paul says — “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said: It is more blessed to give than to receive.”—*Acts* xx. 35.

lessons to contemplate these solemn mysteries, until when Passion Week arrives, the recital is each day repeated. We witness the bitter agony of the Son of God, in the garden of Gethsemane. We stand by the patient sufferer's side, when arraigned in the hall of Pilate. We follow Him to Calvary, as he painfully toils along amidst the scoffs and jeers of an infuriated mob. We gather around the Cross, and hear that last expiring cry, which shrouded the heavens in darkness, and startled even the sleeping dead in their tombs. Hard, indeed, must be that heart—yes, utterly “past feeling”—which, amid scenes like these, is not awakened to gratitude and devotion. He can be no true follower of the Lord, whose spirit does not “burn within him” as he thus contemplates the mighty price at which his redemption was purchased, or whose resolution is not strengthened, to live for that Master who died a death of shame for him.

Another reason with the Primitive Church for the institution of this season was, **TO AID HER MEMBERS IN PRESERVING THE HIGH STANDARD OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IN ITS EARLY PURITY.**

For a time, the followers of our Lord were subjected to the most painful persecutions. The lonely valleys of Judea furnished no place of

security to the Hebrew Christians, for even thither penetrated their bigoted enemies, ready, “if they found any of that way, whether they were men or women, to bring them bound to Jerusalem.” And when the faith left its earliest dwelling place in “Holy Asia,” and went forth to other lands, it found a world arrayed in hostility against it. The ancient, sensual Paganism, and the proud systems of a scoffing philosophy,

*p.* Æschylus' *Prom. Vinct.* 415, ἀγνᾶς Ἀσίας. This is the happy epithet used by the first, and may we not say, the loftiest of the Greek tragic poets? On this single point there is agreement between the Christian of every age, and the believer in that antique and poetical mythology which furnished its inspiration to the muse of Homer, and both called into being, and imparted its dark coloring to the solemn and intellectual drama of the Athenian stage. Both alike look back with reverence to that region which was the birth place of our race, the scene of its first revelations, and where “the Lord talked with man face to face.” Even to this day, there is a tradition among the Arabs, that to the earliest places of human worship, there clings a guardian sanctity—that there the wild bird alights not and the wild beast may not wander—but the eye of God rests on them as hallowed spots.

united at once to crush that holy creed, which disclaimed all fellowship with them. The endurance of its adherents was tried by every expedient of cruelty their enemies could devise. Some died in agony at the stake. Some ascended to their reward from the burning flames, while "their ashes flew, no marble tells us whither." Some, "butchered to make a Roman holiday," poured out their blood on the sands of the amphitheatre, welcoming even the wild beasts, whose fury released them from their sufferings. And the survivors felt, that they also were each hour in jeopardy of life, and might at any time be called in like manner to seal their profession. Yet these things only added a depth and fervor to their devotion. Like their Divine Master, they "were made perfect by sufferings." The timid and wavering, either refrained from uniting with them, or else soon apostatized from their profession. The true-hearted were therefore left alone, reduced indeed in numbers, yet "steadfast, unmovable," and holding themselves ready, if needs be, to win their crown by suffering the pains of martyrdom.

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"Every hour,  
They stood prepared to die, a people doomed  
To death; old men, and youth, and simple maids."

The world looked coldly on them, even when it did not openly persecute, and had therefore nothing in it to enlist their affections. Life with them was one long Lenten period of abstinence and prayer, while they were continually chastening their spirits, to make ready for that parting hour, which might suddenly overtake them.

But when security came, and the world began to smile upon them, then was the time of peril. The faith which had been strengthening in the storm of persecution, drooped and withered in the sunshine of Imperial favor. The multitude insensibly declined from their Apostolic devotion, and thought too much of the cares and riches of a world they had vowed to renounce. Their affections began to cling to it, forgetting that here they were only strangers and pilgrims "having no continuing city." It was at this time probably that this fast, commenced in an earlier age, was more accurately defined and inculcated by the regulations of the Church, that her members might be recalled from their secular cares to holy works, and thus by the necessity of a law, compelled to dedicate one tenth of the year, in a peculiar manner to their God.<sup>q</sup> Therefore it is,

q. Cassian, in Bingham *Orig. Eccles.* lib. xxi, ch. 1, sec. 10.

that an ancient writer declares — “ Whilst men are distracted about the cares of this life, their religious hearts must needs be defiled with the dust of this world ; and therefore it is provided by the great benefit of this Divine institution, that the purity of our minds might be repaired by the exercise of these forty days, in which we may redeem the failings of other times, and do good works, and exercise ourselves in religious fasting.”

But has this necessity in our day ceased? Is there now so great a deadness to the world, that we need not such a season, to recall us to our duty? Is not the very reverse true, and the danger now ten-fold greater than it was in that early day? Since all around us have made a nominal profession of Christianity, the Church has been too much mingled with the world. The barrier between them has been somewhat broken down, and there is comparatively but little of the outward Cross to be borne. But the effect of this is, to authenticate low views of Christian duty—to render religion earthly—to withdraw all attention from self-denial—to cause us to forget

r. Leo, Serm. iv., *de Quadragesima*, in Bingham, lib. xxi.

our Master's lesson, that though *in* the world we are not *of* the world—and to induce those about us to suppose, that the “straight gate” has been widened, and the “narrow way” become broad. They look in vain for those exhibitions of a living faith which distinguished the early Christians, and are therefore tempted to believe, that the days of self-discipline are over, and an easier entrance found into God's holy kingdom.

The very proofs too of Christian character—the marks by which we should ascertain our spiritual state—are in this age of novelties so perverted and mystified, that it is often difficult for an inquirer to decide, whether or not he has a right to those promises of the Gospel which are made to the contrite and believing. With some, every thing rests upon abstract notions of faith, as if the last Great Judgment would only be a trial of their orthodoxy. With others, all religion is resolved into a matter of mere feeling. Forgetting that the degree of excitement depends upon the power of the imagination, or the peculiar constitution of the mind, they are continually striving to elevate themselves to a greater intensity of emotion, and thus make this, intangible as it is, their test of religious character. The latter form of delusion indeed we may characterize as

being in an especial degree, the popular one of the day. This awakening of the sensibilities and of the imagination, is substituted in the place of that calm, settled, decided resolution to obey the will of our Master, which alone can be an efficient rule of conduct in this evil world. These unearthly paroxysms of devotion, which soon pass away and leave behind them no abiding holiness, are trusted to, instead of that "patient continuance in well doing," which alone can lead us on to "eternal life."

How necessary is it then, that there should be times of reflection, when we may realize what are the true evidences of having passed from spiritual death, to the light and liberty of God's own children! And it is to the standard of pure religion, that the Church at this time endeavors to recall us. A perpetual witness for the faith, her voice is heard "through the ages all along," publishing truths of which an evil world would willingly lose sight, and pointing her members to the bright examples of those who, in earlier, purer days, "fought the good fight," and "inherited the promises." From her we learn, that religion consists, not in talking much and eloquently on the subject—not alone in striving to feel spiritually—not even in being warm and earnest in aiding the



progress of the Church. An individual may do all these things, and yet be only like “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” That faith of the heart by which we “believe unto righteousness,” is no wavering impulse. It is a fixed, steadfast habit of the mind, shewn by our renouncing the spirit of the world—subduing our own evil tempers—living “soberly, righteously, and godly”—“crucifying the flesh, with the affections and lusts”—and acting in truth as the self-denying followers of that Master, of whom it is recorded, that He pleased not Himself.”

And while the Church thus defines the evidences of spiritual life, and declares the Christian conflict to be “an earnest, endless strife,”<sup>s</sup> she at the same time most sternly rebukes the compromising spirit of the day. She summons her children to come out from a sinful and apostate world. She bids them not live as other men do, in ease and idleness, when so much is to be accomplished for their Lord. She inquires, how they can be

s. “One only way to life;

One faith delivered once for all; [call;

One holy band, endowed with Heaven’s high

*One earnest, endless strife —*

This is the Church, th’ Eternal framed of old.”

*Lyra Apostolica.*

“delicate on the earth,” when they are called by their Master to “drink of the cup of which He drank,” and to be conformed to Him alike in His sufferings and His life. And it is by the abstinence and self-mortification of this solemn season, that she strives to impress these lessons. If therefore they listen to her teaching, and tread this scene of mists and shadows beneath their feet, each returning year will endow them with added strength, while they travel onward to that world of light, to which she points them as their eternal home. They will learn to despise the fleeting and the perishable, and even while still imprisoned in this tabernacle of clay their spirits will yearn for communion with the Enduring and the Infinite.

Another reason for the institution of this season in Primitive times was — WITH REFERENCE TO TWO CLASSES OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE THEN TO BE RECEIVED INTO THE CHURCH.

One class was that of the *Catechumens*, who had been preparing for Baptism. As Easter was the fixed and solemn time for their admission to this rite,<sup>t</sup> the Church fasted with them as a pre-

*t.* The most celebrated time for Baptism in the early Church, was *Easter*; next to that, *Pentecost*, or *Whitsuntide*, and then *Epiphany*. The Church

paratory step to their commencing a religious life. Thus Justin Martyr in the second century declares—"As many as are persuaded, and do believe that the things taught and said by us are true and promise to live accordingly, they are instructed to pray, and with fasting to beg of God remission of sins, we praying and fasting together with them. Then they are brought to the place where water is, and are regenerated after the same manner of regeneration as we were regenerated before them."<sup>u</sup> In the same manner, Cyril of Jerusalem thus addresses the Catechumens: "The present season is a season of confession; all worldly cares are to be laid aside, for you strive for your souls. You that have been busy about the things of the world, and troubled in vain for many years, will ye not bestow forty days in prayer for the salvation of your souls?" And again, he says—"there is a large time given you. You have the Penance before you of

however still allowed her members the liberty to anticipate these times, if either Catechumens were great proficient, or in danger of death by disease or any sudden accident. — Bingham's *Orig. Eccles.* lib. xi, ch. 6, sec. 7.

<sup>u</sup>. Bingham, lib, xxi, ch. 1, sec. 12.

forty days, sufficient space and opportunity to put off the old garments, and put on the new.”<sup>o</sup> Upon this account all candidates for baptism were obliged to give in their names, forty days before the administration of the rite.

Such was the interest the early Christians took in those who were to be united with them in the fellowship of the Church. They were jealous for the honor of their Master, and the purity of the faith. They were earnest that those about to avow His name should not walk unworthy of their calling, and therefore through all this season, they prayed and fasted with them. They felt a zeal for the whole body of the faithful, and an ardent desire that no stain should rest upon the religion they professed. They realized, that they were a little band, surrounded by a world which loved them not. Beyond their own little circle they could expect no sympathy, but lived isolated and apart from those among whom they dwelt. When therefore, as was always done by the Apostles, they were addressed as “brethren” a chord was struck, which vibrated through every heart. They knew that they were “heirs *together* of the grace of life.”

Bingham, lib. xxi, ch. 1, sec. 12.

May we not therefore take “shame and confusion of face” to ourselves, because we are so deficient in this feeling ! In this age of cold and selfish worldliness, we have almost ceased to regard “the communion of Saints ” as a reality. And yet, though we think not of it, the tie is a most holy one, which unites those who are disciples of the same faith. They are looking upward to a common Master, invisible indeed to the eye of sense, yet whose presence they everywhere recognize in the occurrences of daily life. Combatants in the same warfare, they are exposed to equal dangers—are contending against common enemies—share in the same hopes and fears—and when the hour of victory comes, expect to join in one triumph, and rejoice in the same bright reward. It is no imaginary bond, therefore, which unites in fellowship, the faithful in Christ Jesus. It is a community of interest in all that men should count most valuable. They are members of one great fraternity, which gathers out its chosen ones from every generation, and includes the just who have already passed into the promised Canaan, and those who are still toiling onward in the wilderness. In the beautiful words of one of our own hymns—

“ Angels, and living saints, and dead,  
But one communion make ;  
All join in Christ, their vital Head,  
And of His love partake.”

And the reason why this great truth is now so little appreciated, is obvious. It is because heresy and schism have entered “ the consecrated host of God’s elect,” rending it asunder, tearing in pieces “ the body of Christ, which is His Church,” and arraying the followers of the same Lord against each other in hostile bands. Every strange form of error which the intellect of fallen man could engraft upon the Gospel, is rife around us, until the pure Faith stands like Milton’s personification of Chastity, amidst “ the rout of monsters ” who composed the crew of Comus. The Church herself is as a beleaguered city, and the countless parties by which she is encircled, “ have pitched their tents all about the holy camp, like the mixed multitude that followed the true Israel of God from out the land of Egypt.” And the result is, that men become accustomed to the sight of discord and the cry of disunion. They even forget the “ fellowship ” which should subsist between those who “ continue steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Party names fill the

earth, and individuals withdraw themselves into their own little circles, and send forth no sympathy and love to the millions who are without, though their faith may be the same. But how different is this from the feeling which prevailed in ancient times ! Then, when the fold of Christ was one, and her prayers in every place the same, her members, wherever they were in the earth, felt that they were among brethren, and recognized in every lineament the same Church which had existed “in their father’s days, and in the old time before them.” Then, in the remote East, and in Northern Africa, as well as in Western Europe, they were all united in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

Touching indeed is the illustration given of this truth, by the feelings awakened in the mind of a celebrated Venetian traveler of those days, when a wanderer from his home, in one of the cities of distant England, he met a funeral train ! “There was nothing new, or strange, or singular, about the burial procession, particularly calculated to excite the attention of Marco Polo. The *De Profundis* of the stoled priest spake the universal language, adopted by the most sublime of human compositions, the Liturgy of Western Christendom. Yet, though no objects appeared which

could awaken any lively curiosity in the traveler, there was much in their familiarity to excite the sympathy of the wanderer in a foreign land. With an altered tone he said to the friar, 'Saddened is the spirit of the pilgrim, by the dying twilight and the plaining Vesper bell. But he who braves every danger for himself, may feel his heart sink within him when the pageant of triumphant death brings to his mind the thought, that those from whom, as he weened, he parted for a little time only, may have been already borne to the sepulchre. Yet there is also a great and enduring comfort to the traveler in Christendom. However uncouth may be the speech of the races amongst whom the pilgrim sojourns, however diversified may be the customs of the regions which he visits, let him enter the portal of the Church, or hear, as I do now, the voice of the minister of the Gospel, and he is present with his own, though Alps and oceans may sever them asunder. There is one spot where the pilgrim always finds his home. We are all one people when we come before the Altar of the Lord.'"<sup>w</sup>

How beautiful is this picture! and how sad does it make the change which now we witness!

<sup>w</sup>. Sir Francis Palgrave's *Merchant and Friar*, p. 138.



What a dejection of spirit often comes over the Christian, as he is reminded of this subject in repeating the Confession—"I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church!" Is there not reason, then, at this Holy season, when the Universal Church is every where, at the same time, prostrating herself before the Lord, that we should pray for a return of those golden days when the faithful were one in heart and name? Yes—though oceans may roll between, and we never meet face to face on earth, we have still an interest in each one who is united with the Church, wherever he may be, for we are all "members one of another." Let us then petition our Common Father, that He will grant us more of that spirit which distinguished the Christian host in earlier and better days, until we realize, that He "has knit together his elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of his Son Christ our Lord."<sup>x</sup>

The other class of persons, who were preparing at this time to be received into the Church, were the *Penitents*, who had once been cut off for their sins, but after having completed their Canonical time of probation, during which they were excluded from her services, were generally

x. Collect for All Saints Day,

absolved and readmitted at the time of the Easter Festival. Some of them for flagrant sins, had been kept under this penitential discipline for years, until by evident humility and earnestness, they had given the fullest proof of their contrition and amendment.<sup>y</sup> It is to this that an ancient Bishop refers, when he says—"The Anniversary solemnity of Easter, was not only the time of regenerating Catechumens, but of begetting those again to a lively hope, who had forfeited it by their sin, but were desirous to regain it by repentance and conversion from dead works, to

y. The discipline was far from being nominal. It was often such as nothing but the deepest feelings of contrition could have induced them to bear. In some cases, they were obliged to appear in sackcloth, with ashes on their heads—the men to cut off their hair, and the women to go veiled, as a token of sorrow and mourning—to abstain from feasting, and even the innocent diversions of life—to practice abstinence, mortification and fasting, in private, as well as to observe the public fasts of the Church—to show their liberality to the poor in an eminent degree—and in some Churches to exercise their humility by taking upon themselves the office and care of burying the dead. See Bingham, lib. xviii, ch. 2, sec. 4.

walk again in the paths of life.”<sup>z</sup> Cyprian also in his Epistles, speaks of Easter as the great and solemn time of readmitting Penitents.

These indeed were the days of rigid discipline in the Church, when the offender was obliged to make his confession and his repentance as open as his sin, that no stain might rest upon the purity of the faith. And in enforcing these rules, no immunity was granted to rank or power. Look, for example, at the case of the Emperor Theodosius. Having ordered a massacre by his troops at Thessalonica, in which several thousand lives were sacrificed, St. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, at once charged him with his guilt, and refused to hold intercourse with one thus stained with innocent blood. The doors of the Church were closed against the Master of the world, and he was commanded to bow to that authority which is above all earthly rule. The subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical power was clearly proclaimed in that emphatic sentence — “The Emperor is of the Church, and in the Church, but not above the Church.” Having desired, even on the Festival of the Nativity, to attend its services, he was met at the entrance of

<sup>z</sup>. Gregory Nyssen. (Bingham, lib. xxi, ch. 1, sec. 13.)

the sanctuary by the intrepid prelate, who boldly rebuked him for his want of humility, and ordered him not to pollute the temple with his presence until he had been absolved from his iniquity. Thus, for eight months, he was ignominiously excluded from those holy offices of the Church which were freely afforded to the meanest of his subjects—even to the beggar and the slave. Theodosius pleaded in his defence the example of David. “Since then you have imitated his offence”—replied the Bishop—“imitate also his penitence.” At length, on his public humiliation, St. Ambrose consented to admit the Emperor, not into the Church itself, but into the outer porch, the place for the public penitents. There, prostrate on the pavement, stripped of his imperial ornaments, beating his breast, and watering the ground with his tears, the master of the Roman Empire, and the legislator of the world, received his hard wrung absolution. Thus it was that the Church then stood forth, as the champion of the oppressed, and extended her penalties over the mightiest of the earth.<sup>a</sup>

But how imposing must have been this penitential discipline, so rigorously enforced! “The Church was not then divided into separate inde-

a. Milman's *History of Christianity*, vol. ii, p. 230.

pendent bodies, holding no communication with each other, which might enable an offender, when expelled from one to attach himself to another, and thus maintain, in defiance of his condemners, an outward union with Christ. He might as well have endeavored to escape the penalties of rebellion against the head of the Roman Empire by removing from one province to another. So spotless too was her innocence, so bright her holiness, that none dared question for a moment the justice of her decisions; and her sentence, however rigorous it might be, was deemed to be ratified in Heaven; to be cut off from her, was effectually to be cut off from Christ. Thus, both her blessings and her censures were an outward expression, an earthly type, by which men were warned of what judgment was proceeding in Heaven upon their conduct of life, and her slowness of forgiveness, and the fiery probation to which she submitted the penitent, were well calculated to dispel those hurtful notions which men now so generally entertain of the ease and the speed of the process of forgiveness of sins"<sup>b</sup> The multitude, often but partially reclaimed from barbarism, who could be restrained by no worldly motives, and

*b. Rectory of Valehead, p. 164.*

over whom the civil authority of the land exerted but little power when it came into conflict with their passions, were obliged to tremble as the awful denunciations of the Church fell upon their ears. To them there was a fearful yet salutary lesson taught, by the public shame of the penitent — his deep humiliation — the bitterness and intensity of his remorse. It was with these individuals, then, whose probation had been so severe, but who were now again to be received into the body of the faithful, that the Church at this season prayed and fasted, that their sins might be washed away, and the comfortable hope which once they had forfeited be again restored.

And if the evil days on which we have fallen, prevent the Church in this age from enforcing with a wholesome severity, her primitive discipline, is there not double reason why her members should bewail their sins, and pray God not to visit upon them the recompense of their offences? Should not their petition be—"Spare thy people, good Lord, and let not thine heritage be brought to confusion?" And in harmony with such convictions, we find that all the services of Lent breathe an evident feeling of contrition—that we every where present ourselves in the at-

titude of humility, and pray our merciful Father to grant us "perfect remission and forgiveness." Let us strive then to partake of the spirit of these petitions: and when we look around us and remember how far, as a Church, we have wandered from the path of primitive holiness, how lukewarm is our devotion, and how feeble our faith compared with what it should be, we shall realize that there is reason for that deep and searching penitence which our Master seeks to kindle up within us, and the expression of which is heard so often in our Liturgy.

These, then, are the reasons which induced the early Church to institute this Holy Season, thus exercising the power entrusted to her, "to decree rites or ceremonies."<sup>c</sup> It is with her sanction that we are summoned to its observance. It is impressed upon us by the solemn voice which comes down from the years of a distant and dim antiquity. In these services many generations have already joined, and thus gathered strength for the journey which lay before them. They have long since passed away, leaving to us not only their bright examples, but also the

<sup>c</sup> Article xx. *Of the Authority of the Church*--  
"The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies."

record of their experience. We stand in their places. We are the honored guardians of all those rites and institutions which they in their day found useful in the Church, and then bequeathed to such as should come after them. Solemn indeed is the trust—may we never betray it! May we always remember that we are “baptized for the dead”—inheriting their responsibilities—enjoying the fruits of their labors—and that we must commit this sacred heritage undiminished to our successors. Let us never then be willing to give up these ancient services, which were used by the holy dead, whose memory we love, or to substitute in their place the novelties of an age “emulous of change.” Let us be content to tread the path which still gleams brightly with the steps of those who for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s “counted not their lives dear unto themselves.” Let us strive, as they did, against an unholy world—loving with a true devotion, the Church for which they died—and seeking to imbibe the spirit which reigns in her courts. And then, when “life’s fitful fever” is over, we shall be admitted with the just whom we have followed on earth, to the Paradise of God—to “the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.”



## The Proper Observance of Lent.

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Nor wonder that the widow'd Church should sound  
Of sadness; there are mourners Christ hath blest,  
Who watch with her their annual, weekly, round,  
And in obedience find the promis'd rest.

*The Cathedral.*



## II.

### The Proper Observance of Lent.

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We are told, that in one of the darkest periods of Jerusalem's apostacy, and when her ruin by a powerful invader was just at hand, another reprieve was granted, and one more summons to repentance sent forth. "And in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth ; and behold, joy and gladness." Thus it was, that her people scorned the prophet's message, and turned as usual to their worldly pleasures. But the decision of God upon their conduct, is thus given by Isaiah : "And it was revealed in mine ear by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts."<sup>a</sup>

And thus, by the voice of His Church, is God at this season calling us also "to weeping and

<sup>a</sup>. Isaiah xxii, 12, 13, 14.

mourning.” So comprehensive too is the summons, that none who bear the Christian name can plead exemption. The command is—“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck at the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet; let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach.”<sup>b</sup> In this way it is, we are directed, by chastening our spirits, to prepare to celebrate our Lord’s solemn sacrifice—that mysterious passion and agony which the world can never fully comprehend, and to the history of which it can only listen with an awful reverence. How then shall we keep this holy season? How can we most fully enter into the spirit of its services—availing ourselves of these opportunities to approach our God—afflicting the soul now, that hereafter it may be saved forever? In answer to these inquiries, and that we may know how to carry out the design of the Church for our spiritual

*b*, Scripture appointed for the Epistle for Ash-Wednesday.

benefit, let us look at some of the methods in which we may best observe this solemn period of our Ecclesiastical year.

ABSTINENCE FROM WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS, is one particular which most naturally occurs to us. In the early Church, not only was the attendance of her members on all public games and shows forbidden during the season of Lent, but the prohibition was even extended to the celebration of marriages, and the anniversaries of birth days, because these took place with feasting, and tokens of joy and pleasure, inappropriate to a season which should be devoted to deep humiliation and mourning.<sup>c</sup> St. Chrysostom, in his Lent sermons, inveighs with his usual zeal, against any violation of these salutary rules. In the midst of his sharp invectives against those who had attended the Circus at this time, he says : “ When I consider, how at one blast of the devil ye have forgotten all my daily admonitions and continued discourses, and run to that pomp of Satan, the horse race in the Circus, with what heart can I think of preaching to you again, who have so soon let slip all that I said before ? This is what chiefly raises my grief, yea my anger and indignation, that together with my admonition ye have

<sup>c</sup>, See Bingham's *Orig. Eccles.* lib. xxi, ch. 1, sec. 21.

cast the reverence of this holy season of Lent out of your souls, and thrown yourselves into the nets of the devil. What profit is there in your fasting! What advantage in your meeting together so often in this place?<sup>d</sup> And again, in another Homily, while in a pathetic manner exhibiting to them the moral influence of this conduct, his language is—"Subdue, I beseech you, this wicked and pernicious custom. And consider, that they who run to the Circus, not only do much harm to themselves, but are the occasion of great scandal to others. For when the Jews and Gentiles see you, who are every day at Church to hear a sermon, come notwithstanding to the horse-race, and join with them in the Circus, will they not reckon our religion a cheat, and entertain the same suspicion of us all? They will sharpen their tongues against us all, and for the offences of a few condemn the whole body of Christians. Neither will they stop here, but rail at our Head, and for the servant's fault blaspheme our common Lord, and think that a sufficient apology and excuse for their own errors, that they have something to object to the life and conversation of others."<sup>e</sup>

*d.* St. Chrys. tom. ii, p. 49, Hom. 6, in Gen.

*e.* St. Chrys. tom. ii, p. 61 Hom. 7, in Gen.

And if worldly amusements have in this age changed their form, still their nature and influence are the same. A ceaseless struggle for our affections is going on, and the choice we make determines our state, not only in this life, but through all the wasteless ages of our immortality. The tempter still arrays before the Christian, the glare and gaudiness of this fleeting scene, that his attention may be distracted, and his progress towards Heaven impeded. On the other hand, it is the object of our faith, to cause him to look away beyond "things seen and temporal" to those which are "unseen and eternal." We must live in this lower world, as pilgrims whose hopes and affections are not here—who bear about with them the consciousness that this is not their home, but that they are only journeyers through the wilderness, toiling onward to the promised land. We are to be like St. Paul, "crucified with our Lord to the world, and the world to us"—gazing on its pleasures with the same unconcern with which the dying man would from the Cross—putting it from us, and leaving untried no means which may avail, to destroy the witchery of its enchantments, and to break its power over our hearts. We are even to give up its lawful comforts and its innocent enjoy-

ments, when called to this sacrifice for any worthy end; for there may come occasion to the follower of the Lord to "take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." Thus, in striving to be more conformed to his Master, or more entirely to be disentangled from this scene of temptation, he may be obliged to offer upon the altar of Christian duty, all those affections which twine most closely about the heart, "losing his life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, that he may save it."

"Sweet is the smile of home ; the mutual look  
When hearts are of each other sure ;  
Sweet all the joys that crowd the household nook,  
The haunt of all affections pure ;  
Yet in the world even these abide, and we  
Above the world our calling boast :  
Once gain the mountain top, and thou art free ;  
Till then, who rest, presume ; who turn to look,  
are lost."

It was to escape the unholy influence of this world's fascinations, that the followers of our Lord were accustomed, in the olden time, to flee from this scene of trial, and in the solitary her-

*f. Keble's Christian Year. First Sunday in Lent.*



mitage, or the desert waste, where no man was, to pass their lives in communion with their God, and in making ready for their last account. But no precept of Scripture authorized them to rend the ties of duty, and for a selfish motive, to burst the chains which bound them to home and kindred. "It is a wretched righteousness" — says Luther, in one of his letters to Spenlein — "which will not bear with others, because it deems them evil, and seeks the solitude of the desert, instead of doing good to such, by long suffering, by prayer, and example. If thou art the lily and the rose of Christ, know that thy dwelling place is among thorns."

Nor did they by this desertion attain their object. The piety at which they aimed, was tinged with dreamy reveries, and evaporated in contemplation of an imaginary purity. The passions in their breasts which they had hoped to root out, turned inward, and centered in themselves, and they found that if they could escape from the world without, they must still carry with them that little world within, in subduing which the conflict chiefly consists. They had cast from them the weapons of their warfare, and fled from the strife, leaving an ungodly world to roll on to destruction, unrebuked and unaided, and they

reaped their retribution. They deprived themselves of all those high and ennobling feelings, which purify the heart, while they animate men to exertion. Their selfishness recoiled upon themselves, and the dreamy enthusiast who wished to be wiser than Scripture, and to improve upon the example of his Lord, found that he had not added to the fortitude of his virtue. He had sacrificed his happiness, and become but too often only a gloomy misanthrope.<sup>g</sup>

g. These remarks will of course apply only to the solitaries. While their cells were the very nurseries of superstition, they were said, in the language of Alcuin, "to lead an angelical life." Archbishop Leighton, however, much more truly describes an angelical life, as "a life spent between ascending in prayer to fetch blessings from above, and descending to scatter them among men." The monastic institutions were free from many of those difficulties of which we have spoken, and in the purer days of the Church rendered essential service to the cause of religion, when society around was in a rude and almost barbarous state. The monks were often learned and industrious — the patterns of active virtue — the liberal dispensers of charity — and the zealous promoters of learning and useful arts. "It was a great benefit, that there should be places of education,

The true trial of our life here is to meet with evil, and yet, by God's grace to overcome it — to be *in* the world, and yet so to trample it under our feet as to show, that we are not *of* the

where the young might be trained for the service of the Church or state : it was well that there should be places of retirement, where the aged might end their days in penitence and prayer ; and places of refuge, where the orphan and friendless might find support and protection" (Churton's *Early Eng. Church*, p. 104. See chap. v and vi). They who in the reign of Henry VIII. were grasping at the wealth of the monasteries, eagerly united to villify their occupants, and succeeding generations have quietly received their report, with scarcely the trouble of a doubt. But the true history of the monastic institution is yet to be written, by one, who with a philosophical eye can read its influence on the spirit of the age and the character of society, and who is ready with an unprejudiced, impartial feeling to acknowledge its benefits, while he points out the evils to which it ultimately gave birth.

It is probably not known to many of our readers, that there are in the kingdom of Hanover, eleven Protestant convents, or (to give them a better name) "religious houses." They are asylums, to which respectable females "when thrown out upon the world by the dissolution of their families, can retire,

world—to have its fascinations around us, and yet to turn from them. Its Circean song may float sweetly to our ears, but yet it must not beguile us to pass over into the land of its enchantments. It is in the fiery ordeal of temptation, and amidst the din and struggle of the conflict, that man learns to know himself, and to estimate aright his own spiritual powers. His hopes become more clear after every conquest which he makes—his reliance upon things unseen and eternal is strengthened—and his whole Christian character is matured and perfected. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” There is true wisdom indeed in the eloquent words of Milton, when he says — “He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian.

without experiencing those mortifications which are so frequently attendant upon adversity” (Dwight’s *Germany*, p. 100). An English lady has of late years founded a similar house, at Clifton near Bristol (Churton’s *Early Eng. Church*, p. 382). The inmates of none of these institutions, however, are bound by those ensnaring vows which produced much of the evil in the Romish Church.

I can not praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. That which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. Which was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spencer, describing true Temperance under the person of Guion, brings him in with his Palmer through the cave of Mammon, and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, and yet abstain."

Yet it is evident, on the other hand, that a temporary retirement from the bustle and tumult of this busy life, is requisite to enable the spirit to shake off the worldliness which has been insensibly growing upon it, and to plume its wings again for Heaven. It is necessary, that man should now and then withdraw within himself, think of his eternal interests, and examine with peculiar care, his account with God. "We must retire inward"—says St. Bernard,—“if we would ascend upward.” It is with this view, therefore, that the Church from the earliest age, has yearly in the season of Lent, recalled her children from the absorbing cares of time, and

gathered them into her own bosom, to meditate and pray.

The question—how much under ordinary circumstances, we may mingle in the gayeties and amusements of the world—is one which each individual must determine for himself. He knows their effect upon his own heart, and the influence of his example upon those around him, and must act accordingly. If after having in baptism solemnly renounced “the pomps and vanities of this wicked world,” he still thinks it right to devote himself to them, he must be guided by his own conscience in this important decision. If he thinks it fit, that on Sunday his friends should see him kneeling at the altar, professing to forsake the world, and then on the week day, meet him in all its frivolities and gayeties, until they suspect that his religion is only intended to be put on in Church, his is the responsibility, and his must be the retribution. To his own Master he must stand or fall. But the hour is rapidly coming, when from the bed of death and the bar of judgment, each one will be forced to look back upon these scenes, and decide whether he acted well and wisely while life was going on.<sup>h</sup>

*h.* One of the most common charges against the

Yet there are times and seasons, when there can be no mistake on this subject, and when the Church has decided that her children must retire, in a peculiar manner, from this world, to think of

Church is, that her members are permitted to mingle in the gayeties of the world in a manner inconsistent with Christian character, and particularly to frequent theatrical amusements. This is no place, of course, to discuss the question, whether they do so more than those who are connected with the different denominations around them. We can only say, that when Churchmen are found in this situation — thus bringing discredit on their profession — it is in utter violation of the rules of the Church, and at variance with the spirit she endeavors to inculcate upon them by every one of her services, from the comprehensive Baptismal Vow, even to that last solemn prayer in the Visitation of the Sick, which commends the departing soul to the mercy of its God. As conclusive evidence of the sense of the Church on this point, we can give the highest authority — that of the House of Bishops in General Convention. It stands thus recorded on their Journal :

“*Tuesday May 27th, 1817.* Resolved, That the following be entered on the Journal of this House and be sent to the House of Clerical and Lay deputies, to be read therein :

that which is to come. Such, for instance, is the week which precedes the administration of the Holy Communion. It is with reference to this, that her ministers are commanded, "to give

"The House of Bishops, solicitous for the preservation of the purity of the Church, and the piety of its members, are induced to impress upon the Clergy the important duty, with a discreet but earnest zeal, of warning the people of their respective cures, of the danger of an indulgence in those worldly pleasures which may tend to withdraw the affections from spiritual things. And especially on the subject of gaming, of amusements involving cruelty to the brute creation, *and of theatrical representations*, to which some peculiar circumstances have called their attention—they do not hesitate to express their unanimous opinion, *that these amusements, as well from their licentious tendency, as from the strong temptations to vice which they afford, ought not to be frequented.* And the Bishops can not refrain from expressing their deep regret at the information that in some of our large cities so little respect is paid to the feelings of the members of the Church, that theatrical representations are fixed for the evenings of her most solemn Festivals."—*Journal of Gen. Con.* 1817, p. 46.

Any one acquainted with the regular steps of degradation through which the theatre has passed during



warning for its celebration upon the Sunday or some holy day immediately preceding." And at the same time it is made their duty to their hearers, "to exhort them in the mean season, so to search and examine their own consciences, that they may come holy and clean to such a heavenly feast, in the marriage garment required by God in Holy Scripture, and be received as worthy partakers of that holy table." Now unless this appeal is a mere formality, and means nothing, surely we are expected in the interval to prepare ourselves for uniting in that solemn mystery, and no one needs this preparation more than the individual who loves this world so well that he finds it hard to obey the injunction. But is this to be done, amidst the bustle and excitement of worldly pleasure? No — it is not there that God is accustomed to meet us, with the in-

the last twenty-five years, will acknowledge that if it had "a licentious tendency" in 1817, that demoralizing influence is doubly powerful in this day. Let not then occasional inconsistencies of members of the Church — inconsistencies, we believe, becoming each year more rare — be brought forward as any illustration of the spirit of the Church. These are the exceptions, and their conduct is looked upon by their fellow members with sorrow and shame.

fluences of His grace, or the rich aids of His Spirit. Let us not then endeavor, thus to mingle earth with Heaven, or to come to our Master's solemn feast with thoughts distracted by frivolity and amusement. Let us walk entirely as "children of the light," or not attempt to worship at the altars both of Christ and Belial.

Such a season, again, is that of Lent. Listen to the tones of earnest repentance which the services of the Church breathe forth, and then say, whether after giving utterance to these, we can rush at once into the embraces of a world, from which we have just prayed to be delivered. But are there any, who feel that six weeks is too long a time to withdraw from earthly pleasures? What — we would ask in reply — what must be the state of that spirit — what its preparation for Heaven — in which such thoughts could be entertained? This cleaving to the objects of our earthly worship — this miserable hankering after pleasures we profess to have abandoned — proclaim but too clearly a self-deceived heart, still unbaptized by the Spirit from on high. Such an one has reason to fear, lest the day of solemn trial find him without the wedding garment. When at this season then, God calls to "weeping and mourning," shall it be said of us, "behold, joy and gladness?"

SELF-EXAMINATION is another obvious duty which we must perform during the period of Lent. This naturally follows from what has been already advanced. If we withdraw from the world, it is not that we may spend our time in listless idleness, but that we may employ ourselves in girding up our loins anew, and trimming our lamps, to be ready for our Lord's appearing. It is that we may "commune with our own hearts and be still." It is, that we may review the past, and as we compare our actions with the law of God, decide whether or not we are walking in the way of His commandments.

And who that knows the deceitfulness of the human heart—who that has ever read our Master's repeated warnings that we should "watch"—will say that this is unnecessary! We go forth to the world, with our decision made to serve the Lord, and our Christian hopes burning brightly; but as one day after another passes by, insensibly we lose the simplicity of our religious character, and become at last "of the earth, earthly," before we even suspect that we have departed from the fervor of our earliest love. "The gold becomes dim, and the fine gold changed." Our thoughts are drawn off from

our Master and his cause, until the excitements and allurements which are around produce their natural result, and we begin to be willing to take our portion with those whom we had professed to leave. We learn to persuade ourselves, to yield in things which a more tender conscience would have taught us to refuse, until our service becomes partial and worldly, and we are no longer heartily devoted to the Lord.

Now, how many thus pass through life? At times, the monitor within utters its voice, and they are forced to doubt, whether or not they are in the faith. Yet they at once dispel these disagreeable thoughts. From a natural indolence of disposition, they shrink from the task of investigating their own hearts. They seem willing to live along, trusting that it may in the end be well with them. They postpone to the last day, the decision of the most solemn question this world can furnish, although then it will be too late to rectify an error. Is it not therefore well for us, at times to stop in our worldly career, and settle this point? Many are the lessons of solemn caution which our Master gave, to guard against this very danger. The rich man who thought not of death—the servants who ate and drank, but remembered not their Lord's re-

turn—and the virgins who slept when the bridegroom was at hand, and then awoke only to bitter disappointment—are all set forth for our warning. And how miserable would be our state; should the summons thus be heard when we expect it not, and then for the first time the full consciousness burst upon us, that we have been deceiving our own hearts, and serving the world! Let us therefore watch and examine ourselves, that as time passes by, there may grow no rust upon our souls, and no habitual sin darken the mirror on which the pure light of Heaven should be reflected. Let us not, when once we have girded on our armor, lay it aside or be found sleeping at our post. In the solemn day of our Master's appearing, when "all kindreds of the earth wail because of Him," let us be found among those chosen ones, whom the Church has gathered into her fold, trained in every holy work, and purified for her Lord, that they might be found ready when His marriage hour should come.

There is one more way, by which we should peculiarly mark this season as one of penitence—it is by **FASTING**. On the morning of Ash-Wednesday, we prostrate ourselves before our God and say—"Be favorable, O Lord, be favorable

to thy people, who turn to thee in weeping, fasting and praying." And yet by how many, have we not reason to fear, are these words uttered, who shrink from the Christian duty of which they speak! It is much more easy to offer unto God the tribute of our lips, than to chasten and discipline the body. We believe it is for this reason, that in these days when men seek their own comfort, this practice which has prevailed through all ages of the Jewish and Christian Churches, has fallen so much into disuse.

Yet take up the word of God, and what duty is spoken of more decidedly, or the performance of which is more frequently followed by a blessing! Joshua and the elders of Israel, when defeated by the men of Ai, kept a solemn fast, as they remained all day, "until the even-tide," prostrate on the earth before the ark, with dust upon their heads, in humiliation and prayer. And the result was, that victory again attended them. David fasted as well as prayed, when he humbled himself before God after his sin against Uriah, and although deprived of his child, yet his iniquity was forgiven. The inhabitants of Nineveh, in fear of judgments obeyed the decree of their King, when he proclaimed—"Let neither

man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing ; let them not feed nor drink water ; but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God ”—and their city was spared. The devoted Ezra, when setting out for Jerusalem, assembled the returning captives at the river Ahava, and there “ proclaimed a fast, that they might afflict themselves before God, and seek of Him a right way for themselves and their little ones, and for all their substance ’—and he obtained the blessing he asked. And thus we might go through the Old Testament, and show that on every important occasion, the ancient saints under the former dispensation not only prayed but fasted also.

And so it continued to be, when the Gospel dawned upon the earth. Anna was “ serving God with fastings and prayers, night and day,” when her petition was answered, and she saw her Savior. Our Lord himself, before he entered on His public ministry, passed through a long period of preparatory fasting. The Apostles did so, before every solemn act in which they engaged. They were “ in fastings often.” St. Paul frequently refers to the use of this means of grace. He declares, that he “ approves himself a minister of God,” as in other things, so

“in fastings also ;” and he writes to the Corinthians—“ Give yourselves to fasting and prayer.” Cornelius, “ the devout centurion,” was engaged in fasting, when the angel announced to him, that his alms and prayers had “ come up for a memorial before God.” St. Peter was fasting, when that wonderful vision revealed to him the admission of the Gentiles into the Church of God, and commissioned him to be to them, the earliest herald of the Gospel. The Church at Antioch was fasting, when the Holy Ghost said, “ separate me Barnabas and Saul.”

Neither can it be argued, that this was not expressly commanded by our Lord. He found the practice in use, and spake of it as one which should be continued. He gave directions to His disciples, how they ought to fast, and promised that they should be recompensed for the right performance of this duty. “ But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Well therefore has Hooker remarked—“ Our Lord and Savior would not teach the manner of doing, much less propose a reward for doing, that which were not both holy and acceptable in



God's sight."<sup>i</sup> But our Master also expressly declared, that after His departure His children in sorrow for his absence, should thus afflict themselves. "The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." Does not this clearly prove the truth, that He considered it as a duty?

What again, we would ask, means that declaration of His, with respect to the faith which could remove mountains? "Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting." Do not these words imply, that there are nobler attainments in the Christian life to be gained by those, who through severity to themselves are able to strive after them? And do they not point out, "the unseen strength" of fasting as that which is to enable the Christian warrior to win the brightest crown? Yes, this is that "more excellent way" which is opened to those "who will receive it."

And this was the light in which the early Church regarded this duty. In those days, when they stood near to their Lord, and walked in His hallowed footsteps, how often is this practice mentioned as one, whose value the Church fully

i. *Eccles. Polity*, b. v, sec. 72.

appreciated ! Thus, St. Chrysostom says — “ Though at other times when we preachers cry up and preach the duty of fasting never so much all the year, scarce any one hearkens to what we say, yet when the season of forty days is come, though none exhort or advise them, the most negligent set themselves to it, taking admonition and advice from the very season.”<sup>j</sup> And again he adds—“ If a Jew or a Heathen ask you, why do you fast ? Do not tell him, it is for our Savior’s Passion on the cross ; for so you will give him an handle to accuse you. For we do not fast for the Passion or the Cross, but for our sins, because we are come to the Holy Mysteries. The Passion is not the occasion of fasting or mourning, but of joy and exultation. We mourn not for that, but for our sins, and therefore we fast.”

The manner too of their fasting in those ancient days, shows how thoroughly they desired to fulfill this duty. Instead of considering a change of food only as being sufficient, they entirely abstained from all sustenance through the whole day until the evening. Thus we find St. Ambrose, in one of his exhortations to his hearers to observe the Lent Fast, bidding them — “ defer

*j. St. Chrys. tom. v, Hom. 52, p. 709.*

eating a little, because the end of the day is not far off.”<sup>k</sup> St. Chrysostom in his Lent sermons frequently alludes to the same circumstance. “Let us” — he says — “set a guard upon our ears, our tongues, and minds, and not think that bare fasting till the evening is sufficient for our salvation.”<sup>l</sup> And again in another passage, which we can not forbear quoting entire, on account of the admirable view which it gives of this whole duty. We have indeed been frequently induced to transfer to these pages more of the writings of the old Fathers of the Church, than many persons may think desirable. But when at the present day, “ancient Christianity”<sup>m</sup>

*k.* Bing. *Orig. Eccles.* lib. xxi, chap. 1, sec. 16.

*l.* *St. Chrys.* tom. ii, Hom. 4, in Gen., p. 37.

*m.* It might seem scarcely worth while to notice the work published a couple of years since under the imposing title of “Ancient Christianity,” were it not for the fact, that it continues to be an arsenal from which the enemies of the Primitive Church draw their weapons. The Rev. Fred. W. Faber, in his tract on “The Unfulfilled Glory of the Church,” gives this admirable abstract of its argument, and the beautiful practical result to which Mr. Taylor leads his readers. “His view, so far as we can

is held up to scorn, and mutilated passages are produced to fasten the charge of ignorance or licentiousness upon those, "whose witness is in Heaven and whose record is on high," we think it well to prove, whenever it may be in our power, that men whom the Church has been accustomed to reverence, really "held fast the profession of their faith without wavering." The extract to which we refer is this—"The true fast is abstinence from vices. For abstinence

gather it, from the confused arrangement and ambiguous oracular style of his book, may be stated thus:—That Christianity was never less Christian than when it was ancient (p. 99); that Nicene Christianity was the Apostacy predicted by St. Paul, (p. 299); that Romanism is an improvement upon it, and has done the best it could with it (pp. 78, 79); that, however, the Church did not cast off the slough of Gnosticism and apostacy till the Reformation, (passim); that up to that time oriental Christianity was mainly Sooffeeism and occidental Christianity mainly Brahminism (p. 147, et al.); that the Reformers themselves were too much addicted to "*demonology*;" that the English Church is "*unto-wardly*" Nicene in her formularies; finally, that we must emancipate ourselves forthwith, the means of doing which the author has not yet published."

from meat was appointed upon this occasion, that we should curb the tone of our flesh, and make the horse obedient to his rider. He that fasts, ought above all things to bridle his anger, to learn meekness and clemency, to have a contrite heart, to banish the thoughts of all inordinate desires, to set the watchful eye of God before his eyes, and his uncorrupted judgment; to set himself above riches, and exercise great liberality in giving of alms, and to expel every evil thought against his neighbor out of his soul. This is the true fast. Therefore let this be our care, and let us not imagine, as many do, that we have fasted rightly, when we have abstained from eating until evening. This is not the thing required of us, but that together with our abstinence from meat, we should abstain from those things that hurt the soul, and diligently exercise ourselves in things of a spiritual nature."<sup>n</sup>

Yet we must not forget, in considering their manner of fasting, that an Asiatic climate rendered comparatively easy what to us would appear to be an excessive severity. The lassitude of constitution, and languor of the whole system, which were produced by that genial temperature, enabled them to carry it to an extent, which in

*n. St. Chrys. Hom. 8, in Gen., p. 79.*

this latitude, or among the nations of Northern Europe, would be oppressive, and totally defeat the object for which it was undertaken.

Even in that day, however, this duty was performed with great allowance to human infirmities ; thus showing plainly, that instead of being made a superstitious form, it was used with reference to its spiritual benefits. “Let no one”—says St. Chrysostom—“place his confidence in fasting only, if he continue in his sins without reforming. For it may be, one that fasts not at all, may obtain pardon, if he has the excuse of bodily infirmity. But he that does not correct his sins, can have no excuse. Thou hast not fasted by reason of the weakness of thy body ; but why art thou not reconciled to thy enemies ? Canst thou pretend bodily infirmity here ? If thou retainest hatred and envy, what apology canst thou make ? In such crimes as these thou canst not fly to the refuge of bodily weakness.”<sup>o</sup> And again, in another Homily, he dwells upon this subject still more fully. “If thou canst not pass all the day fasting, by reason of bodily weakness, no wise man can condemn thee for this. For we have a kind and merciful Lord, who requires nothing of us above our strength.

*o. St. Chrys. Hom. 22. de Ira, tom. i, p. 277.*

He neither requires abstinence from meat, nor fasting simply of us, nor that for this end we should continue without eating only; but that withdrawing ourselves from worldly affairs, we should pass all our leisure time in spiritual things. For if we would order our lives soberly, and lay out our spare hours upon spiritual things, and eat only so much as we had need of, and nature required, and spend our whole lives in good works, we should not need the help of fasting. But because human nature is negligent, and gives itself rather ease and pleasure, therefore our kind Lord, as a compassionate Father, hath found out this medicine of fasting for us, that we should abridge ourselves in our pleasures, and transfer our care of secular things to works of a spiritual nature. If therefore there be any here present who are hindered by bodily infirmity, and can not continue all day fasting, I exhort them to have regard to the weakness of their bodies, and not upon that account deprive themselves of spiritual instruction, but for that very reason to pay more diligent attendance on it. For there are many ways besides abstinence from meat, which will open to us the door of confidence towards God. He therefore that eats, and can not fast let him give the more plentiful

alms, let him be more fervent in his prayers, let him show the greater alacrity and readiness in hearing the divine oracles. For the weakness of the body is no impediment in such offices as these. Let him be reconciled to his enemies, and forget injuries, and cast all thoughts of revenge out of his mind. He that does these things, will show forth the true fasting, which the Lord chiefly requires. Therefore I exhort you who are able to fast, to go on with all possible alacrity in this good and laudable work, for by how much more our outward man perishes, so much more our inward man is renewed.”<sup>p</sup>

And the same rule of moderation continues to be that of the Church in our day. Caring for the bodily as well as the spiritual health of her members, she prescribes only such a degree of fasting, as may keep our lower nature in subjection to that which is spiritual. Thus we are taught to pray on the first Sunday in Lent — “O Lord, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honor and glory.”

*p. St. Chrys. Hom. 10, in Gen., tom. ii, p. 91.*



We would also observe, that united with this fast, or rather flowing from it, were more abundant deeds of charity. What they saved by their abstinence they expended on the poor. Thus, we find an Apostolic Father saying:—"A true fast is not merely to keep under the body, but to give to the widow, or the poor, the amount of that which thou wouldst have expended upon thyself; that so he who receives it may pray to God for thee."<sup>q</sup> Origen says—"He found it in some book as a noted saying of the Apostles, "Blessed is he who fasts for this end, that he may feed the poor; this man's fast is acceptable unto God.""<sup>r</sup> St. Chrysostom, in the extracts already given, alludes to this duty, and at a later period, we find St. Augustine writing—"Fasting without almsgiving, is a lamp without oil."

Such then is the argument for this practice, drawn from Scripture, and also the manner of its performance in the early Church. It may be thought by some, that too great a space has been devoted to this discussion; but we must remember, that in the present day, there is probably no duty so little understood, and so lightly evaded.

q. *Hermas Pastor*, in Cotel., tom. i, p. 106.

r. Bing. *Orig. Eccles.*, lib. xxi, ch. 1, sec. 18.

“We will practice mortification and self denial for learning’s sake, but not for Christ’s. We will abstain from joys, and pleasures, and company, and numberless indulgences, and put restraint even on our loves, when ambition calls, but not at the bidding of the Church. We will neglect our health and rest, and become worn and pale, and weary and weak, to gain earthly wisdom, and power of intellect, and shorten our lives to leave our names among posterity lifted some very little, it may be, above the obscurity of the unnumbered dead. But to smooth down the severity of discipline, to have an easy Lent, or go softly through a fast, we are ready to talk of our health and habits, and way of living, and the hardness of our duty, and the weakness of our flesh, and in a light way of the mercy of our God. We are strong to do all things for our selves, our own ambition strengthening us. We are weak for Christ, even though He be ready to give us strength.”<sup>s</sup> And it is, we believe, because this duty is so little practised as a regular habit, that its benefits are so undervalued. It is often eagerly commenced in a fit of transient zeal, but the natural inclinations raise their re-

s. Faber’s tracts on the *Offices of the Church*.

monstrance—it is found wearisome and painful—and after one or two attempts entirely laid aside. But is it not true, that this is scarcely giving it a trial? To be appreciated, and its benefits felt, it must be a habit—be practised often—and become, as it were, a portion of our regular religious service. Thus, that which at first was performed with difficulty, is rendered easy; and we learn at last, that the ancient saints in Primitive days, knew human nature better than we do, and when they urged those who should come after them, to “crucify the flesh” as a source of spiritual benefits, were only giving the result of their own experience.

This then is that discipline, by whose severity we are to weaken the force of passion, and of those appetites which else assert the mastery

*t.* Goethe somewhere makes a remark, which may be applied to the whole circle of our religious duties: “Neither in moral or religious, more than in physical and civil matters, do people willingly do any thing suddenly or upon the instant; they need a succession of the like actions, whereby a habit may be formed; the things which they are to love, or to perform, they can not conceive as insulated and detached; *whatever we are to repeat with satisfaction, must not have become foreign to us.*”

over the soul, and bind it down to earth. "I keep under my body"—says St. Paul—"and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away." And St. Chrysostom declares—"Fasting restrains the body, and checks and bridles its inordinate sallies, but makes the soul much lighter, and gives it wings to mount up and soar on high."<sup>u</sup> It teaches too, the habit of self-denial—leading us at intervals to remember that our object in this life is not to please ourselves, but rather to overcome temptation—to restrain and mortify the cravings of appetite. Thus we conquer that self-indulgence, which if permitted unfits us for spiritual duties.<sup>v</sup> And how forcibly also does it cause us to realize things unseen and eternal! It is an act so contrary to the spirit of this world, that it brings at once before us the truth, that here is not our home. All religious feelings therefore are kindled up, and our habits of prayer and devotion

*u.* St. Chrys. Hom. 10, in Gen., tom. ii, p. 91.

*v.* "It is a most miserable state for a man to have every thing according to his desire, and quietly to enjoy the pleasures of life. There needs no more to expose him to eternal misery." Bishop Wilson—*Sacra Privata*. Wednesday.

are quickened into exercise. And in this active, busy age, when outward excitement has taken the place of earnest, holy contemplation, how necessary becomes any discipline, which can thus withdraw us from the things of time and sense ! By its means we gather strength for the conflict yet before us, in which “ we wrestle not against flesh and blood,” but our enemies are those mighty spirits who once bore a nobler nature than our own—“ powers which erst in Heaven sat on thrones ”—and who still, in their dark apostacy, retain for the accomplishment of evil, the same radiant intellects, with which they were gifted for the service of God. We come forth from our retirement, more subdued and chastened in spirit—with a calm and abiding consciousness, that we must be the true followers of “ the man of sorrows.” Then, like His servants of old, to whom revelations came in the hours of holy abstinence, we are better prepared to listen to the voice of God—our own prayers go up more earnestly to his throne—and our affections are crucified to a world which is fast fleeting away. Therefore it was, that when the Church was reformed from the corruptions of Rome, fasting was still prescribed “ to discipline the flesh, to free the spirit, and render it more earnest and fervent

to prayer, and as a testimony and witness with us before God of our humble submission to His High Majesty, when we confess our sins unto Him, and are inwardly touched with sorrowfulness of heart, bewailing the same in the affliction of our bodies.”<sup>w</sup> There is therefore, as much truth as poetry in the exhortation—

“Deem not such penance hard—thence from the soul

The cords of flesh are loos’d, and earthly woes  
Lose half their power to harm; while self-control

Learns that blest freedom, which she only knows.”<sup>x</sup>

Thus it is then that we may keep this Holy Season—by withdrawing from the world—by self-examination—by prayer and fasting—so that when it has passed, we shall find that we have gained new strength for our onward course. And how strong the argument to do so, as one year after another goes silently by, and we press forward to the grave! Now indeed is our reward nearer than when first we believed. Now is the bridegroom with some of us, almost at hand. Soon we shall hear that warning cry, which will startle even the slumbering from their dreams, and then his train will sweep along, and the glorious band of the Elect who are with Him,

*w.* First Part of the Homily on fasting.

*x.* *The Cathedral.*

go in to the marriage. But does each season, as it thus bears us nearer to the tomb, carry us also nearer to Heaven? Are we ready for that summons, with our account made up, and so living in watchfulness that the coming of the Son of Man can not surprise us? Are we numbered with those "little ones" whose "angels do always behold the face of our Heavenly Father," and whom the Church, by the quiet influence of her rites and services, is diligently training up for immortality? When this decaying life is over, and we are waiting in silence that stroke which dismisses the spirit to its Judge, shall we be able to feel, as we review our days, that we have availed ourselves of all the opportunities our Master afforded, of preparing for that solemn crisis? Life with each one of us must be employed, in becoming meet for the recompense of the just, and in gathering spoils for Eternity. This is the only true use of existence here, and thus only can it be something more than an empty dream. It must be a life, spent in looking forward to its close, and in preparing diligently for that solemn change which is to pass upon all men—

"Life that shall send  
A challenge to its end,  
And when it comes, say 'Welcome, friend.'"





## The Week-day Prayers in Lent.

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Could ye not watch one hour !  
Be ready ! on the bridal train  
And bridegroom, with His dower,  
May sweep along in vain.

Miserere mei !

*Coxe's " Christian Ballads."*



### III.

#### *The Week-Day Prayers in Lent.*

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“What! could ye not watch with me one hour?” was on a certain occasion the appeal made to some of the disciples of our Master. And how solemnly must it have sounded in the ears of those to whom it was addressed! The Person from whom it came—the time—the place in which it was uttered—all united to invest it with emphasis. The Person, was the Lord Jesus Christ. The time, was when His career on earth was just closing, and the morrow was to behold Him stretched upon the Cross. The place, was the garden of Gethsemane, the very name of which awakens in our minds, the remembrance of those fearful sorrows even unto death, of our suffering Lord.

We are told, that on that last night, after He had instituted the sacred rite which was through all ages, both to keep alive in the minds of His

people, the “perpetual memory of His precious death and sacrifice until His coming again,” and also to be their “spiritual food and sustenance.” He delivered His final instructions to the disciples, and then, once more solemnly commended them to the care of His Father who is in Heaven. This was the concluding scene of His ministry, and He therefore prepared Himself for the death which was at hand. Taking Peter, and James, and John, He went forth to the Garden, and “began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me. And He went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed.” And, oh! how fearful was the conflict of spirit which He then endured, when the terrors of the death He was about to suffer, were arrayed before His mind, and His human nature was forced to shrink back from the view! Listen to the earnest words of His petition, as amid the darkness of the night, He prostrated Himself upon the ground: “Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.” And then, “being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops

of blood falling down to the ground.” It was when this prayer was ended—when he had poured out His soul to God, and been strengthened by an angel for His approaching trial, that returning to His disciples, He found them asleep, and awoke them with the mournful appeal—“What! could ye not watch with me one hour?”

And we think that our Lord might address this same touching inquiry to many among us, who in this day profess His name. There is too, in some respects, a degree of analogy between *our* situation, and that of the disciples who first listened to these words. We also are looking forward to that sacrifice on the Cross, the celebration of which will soon arrive. At this solemn season, we are—or ought to be—endeavoring by prayer, and weeping, and fasting, to prepare our hearts for uniting in its commemoration. And to aid us in this work, the Church has appointed peculiar services, well adapted to lead our thoughts away from the things of this world, to contemplate the mysteries of redemption. During each week in the season of Lent, in accordance with her regulations, the House of God is open, that his children may meet, and turn unto Him with that appropriate petition—“Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we,

worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>a</sup>

This then, is the most solemn period of our Ecclesiastical year, whether we look at the nature of the services in which we are invited to join, or that mysterious event to which we are constantly pointed forward. And yet, how seldom do even those who “profess and call themselves Christians, embrace as fully as they ought, these opportunities of communing with God in His holy temple! How frequently, when the sanctuary each week opens its doors, and invites them to break off for a brief period from the bustle and engrossing cares of the world, do they permit the most trivial excuse to prevent them from answering to the call! May not our Lord then say to many among us, as He did to His disciples of old, in a tone of mingled sorrow and reproach — “What! could ye not watch with me one hour!”

Let us then briefly look at some of the motives, which should induce every Christian, to avail himself of the week-day services of the Church during this period.

*a.* Collect for Ash-Wednesday.

THE SEASON ITSELF, presents its earnest appeal. When God delivered the law upon Sinai, the people of Israel were commanded for three days before, to sanctify themselves, that they might be prepared to behold, even from a distance, the glory of Jehovah, as the mountain was wreathed with clouds, and “quaked greatly, because the Lord descended upon it in fire.” When therefore we are called upon to approach that more wonderful mountain, on which, by the tears and blood of the Incarnate Son of God, was wrought out the sublime mystery of man’s redemption, should we not be earnest to put away from us our earthliness of feeling, and to purify our hearts in anticipation of that solemn scene? Yes, as the time draws near, when we are to be led to the Cross—to contemplate the Passion and bitter agonies of our Lord—and to behold Him dying for our salvation, it seems but proper, that we should undergo some additional preparation of heart. We should not rush at once from the tumult of this noisy world, to the foot of Calvary. When still far distant, we should veil our heads, and put our shoes from off our feet, realizing that we are on holy ground. As we slowly approach that spot, to which even angels would look with intense emotion, a holy fear should fall

upon us, and in the depth of our souls we should meditate upon the solemn scene which is to be unfolded to our view.

Is it then asking too much, if during the brief period of these forty days we are invited to assemble in the house of God twice in each week, for a short time to think of our dying Savior, and to bewail the sins which brought him to the Cross? Is there not an evident propriety in that regulation, commenced even in Primitive times, by which Wednesday (the day on which the Jews took counsel to betray our Lord,) and Friday, (the day of his death,) are devoted to affectionate remembrance of Him, and humiliation for ourselves?<sup>b</sup> Did He suffer in agony for our transgressions, and yet, shall we think so lightly of them, that we will not “rend our hearts,” and pray God to blot out our guilt? Can we, while

b. St. Austin says —“This reason may be given, why the Church fasts chiefly on the fourth and sixth days of the week, because it appears upon considering the Gospel, that on the fourth day, which we commonly call *Feria Quarta*, the Jews took counsel to kill our Lord, and on the sixth day our Lord suffered. For which reason the sixth day is rightly appointed a fast.”—Bing. *Orig. Eccles.* lib. xxi, chap. 3, sec. 2.



pursuing this course, realize as we should, the exceeding depth of our degradation? Can we truly estimate, from how fearful a woe we have been delivered, when we will not look to our Lord on the Cross, or remember how terrible were the sufferings which then crushed His human nature?

This indeed is a subject which appeals most plainly to our reason. Is there not every thing in the services, and the hallowed recollections of this period, to induce us to humble ourselves in the dust of abasement before God — to seek pardon for the past, and strength for the future? Should not every principle of gratitude to our Lord cause us to go gladly to the temple with those that keep holyday? Should our public worship be confined to the Sunday; or should we not endeavor, by practice as well as by words, to show our concurrence in that sentence of the *Te Deum* which we so often repeat — “Day by day we magnify Thee?” When therefore all these appeals call forth no response from the hearts of our Lord’s professed followers, may He not say to them — “‘What! could ye not watch with me one hour?’ with *me*, who for your sake became ‘a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief’ — with *me*, who was ‘brought

as a lamb to the slaughter,' that you might live? Must I disrobe myself of my Heavenly glory, and come to this earth of suffering and woe, and pass a weary pilgrimage of thirty years, and yet, my children not be able to watch one single hour, to prepare their hearts to think upon my sacrifice? Did I endure the crown of thorns—the scoffs of men—the malefactor's shame—and the agony of the Cross—and yet, are not those who reap the benefit of my sufferings able to endure a single hour of communion with me—one single hour of watchfulness and prayer?"

Again—by attendance on the week-day prayers, we are in some degree FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE SET US BY THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS. In the ancient Church, there were religious assemblies for prayer and preaching every day through the whole season of Lent. "I can not affirm"—says Bingham—"that it was so in every Parochial Church and country village, but that it was so in the greater or Cathedral Churches, is evident from undeniable proofs and matter of fact."<sup>c</sup>

The Homilies of St. Chrysostom upon Genesis, from which we have already so often quoted, were sermons preached in this manner, day after

*c. Orig. Eccles. lib. xxi, chap. 1, sec. 20.*

day, as is evident from many allusions they contain. Take, for example, a single passage in one of them — “This is not the only thing that is required, that we should meet here every day, and hear sermons continually, and fast the whole Lent. For if we gain nothing by these continual meetings and exhortations and seasons of fasting to the advantage of our souls, they will not only do us no good, but be the occasion of a severer condemnation. If after so much care and pains bestowed upon us, we continue the same ; if the angry man does not become meek, and the passionate mild and gentle ; if the envious does not reduce himself to a friendly temper ; nor the covetous man depart from his madness and fury in the pursuit of riches, and give himself to alms-deeds and feeding the poor ; if the intemperate man does not become chaste and sober, and the vainglorious learn to despise false honor, and seek for that which is true ; if he that is negligent of charity to his neighbor, does not stir up himself, and endeavor not only not to come behind the Publicans (who love those that love them), but also to look friendly upon his enemies, and exercise all acts of charity towards them ; if we do not conquer these affections, and all others that spring up from our natural corrup-

tion ; though we assemble here every day, and enjoy continual preaching and teaching, and have the assistance of fasting : what pardon can we expect, what apology shall we make for ourselves ? ”<sup>d</sup>

Thus it was the custom of the Church, in her primitive and holier days, by constantly recurring periods of devotion, gradually to build up her children in the faith, and in a ripeness of Christian character. Then, she so often called them to prayer, that the world had no opportunity of enlisting their affections, or leading them from the truth. They were forced to walk, “as seeing Him who is invisible.” They devoted to intercourse with Heaven, and to communing with their own hearts before God, times which in this worldly age men could not bear to have snatched from secular employments. They were not contented with coming to their Lord’s temple on the first day of each week alone, but they sanctified the hours of every day with devotion. Look, for instance, at what were called in the early Church, “the Canonical hours of Prayer,”<sup>e</sup>

*d.* *St. Chrys. Hom. 11, in Gen., tom. ii, p. 107.*

*e.* The subject of the daily services in the early Church deserves a brief notice, because in this day

by which without interfering with the business of this world, she regularly called her members to remember the solemn realities of the world which reference is often made to “the *seven* Canonical hours of public prayer in the Primitive Church,” when in fact, no such seasons were known at that time. The appointed periods for daily prayer were probably *three* in number. One of the writers of the Oxford “Tracts for the Times,” (who certainly would not be inclined to diminish these services of the early Church,) says — “the Jewish observance of the third, sixth, and ninth hours for prayer, was continued by the inspired founders of the Christian Church.” (*No. 75, On the Breviary.*) This also was Wheatley’s view. (*On Common prayer, p. 84.*) As late as the time of St. Chrysostom, there is no mention in any writer of more than these three periods. Thus in one place this Father represents an individual as complaining, “How is it possible for me, who am a secular man, and confined to the courts of law, to run to Church, *and pray at the three hours of the day?*” To which St. Chrysostom answers, “that if he could not come to Church, because he was so fettered to the court, yet he might pray even as he *stood there*” (*Hom. 4, de. Anna, tom. ii, p. 995*). Tertullian also incidentally alludes to “*tertia hora, et sexta, et nona,*” as the usual ones of public prayer (*de Jejun. cap. 10*).

is to come, and trained them up systematically for Heaven. "Unwavering, unflagging, not urged by fits and starts, not heralding forth their feelings, but resolutely, simply, perseveringly,

The multiplication of these services began in the Eastern Monasteries, among those who were cut off from secular life, and whose time was entirely given up to devotion. In this way, these appointed seasons were gradually expanded into what were called "the Seven Canonical Hours of Prayer." Yet even in the fourth century, writers who refer to the Six or Seven hours of prayer, speak of the observance of the Monks only, and not of the whole body of the Church. Such is the case frequently in St. Jerome's works. From this beginning, these services were in latter ages easily introduced into the principal Churches. We believe therefore, that our own Church, with the arrangement for daily morning and evening prayers, is much nearer the model of Primitive times, than those who increased these services to Seven (*See Bingham*, lib. xiii, ch. 9, sec. 8).

We refer here to the *public* services, for with regard to the private devotions of the members of the Church we have reason to believe that the vivid picture given by Mr. Newman in the extract quoted above, is but a faithful view of their ordinary customs.

day after day, Sunday and week-day, fast day and festival, week by week, season by season, year by year, in youth and in age, through a life, thirty years, forty years, fifty years, in prelude of the everlasting chant before the Throne—so they went on, ‘continuing *instant* in prayer,’ after the pattern of Psalmists and Apostles, in the day with David, in the night with Paul and Silas, winter and summer, in heat and in cold, in peace and in danger, in a prison or in a cathedral, in the dark, in the day-break, at sun-rising, in the forenoon, at noon, in the afternoon, at eventide, and on going to rest, still they had Christ before them; His thought in their minds, His emblems in their eye, His name in their mouths, His service in their postures, magnifying Him and calling on all that lives to magnify Him, joining with Angels in Heaven and Saints in Paradise to bless and praise him forever and ever.” It was this noble system which raised the early church to that height of holiness, and enabled her to present her followers, as visibly crucified to the world.

But how different at this day is the spirit which prevails! The services of the sanctuary

*f. Newman's Lectures on Justification, p. 387.*

are looked upon too often, as being merely addressed to the intellect. We come to it, too much to listen to the preaching, and too little to commune with our God. We forget, that there it is man holds audience with the Deity. The consequence is, that while our Churches can be filled to listen merely to a human teacher, on prayer days there are but few scattered here and there, who feel the wish to abase themselves before God.<sup>g</sup> And the reason of this is evident. It is easy for individuals, to sit in their seats, and listen to the voice of the preacher. He is “unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument.” His sentences fall upon the ear, and it is a pleasant excitement, to have the intellect aroused, and the imagination addressed, but it is not easy to pray. It requires effort, to command the wandering thoughts—to shut out an intrusive world—to keep the mind intently fixed on God—and to kneel before him with a calm collected, and awakened soul. To have the continual spirit of prayer, is not shown by now and then sending up glowing petitions to Heaven,

g. An old writer quaintly says — “To imagine that prayers at home will be as acceptable to God, as those made in the Church with our brethren, is as if



when the mind is for a time excited. It is something far different from these paroxysms of devotion. It is to come daily before God, in a solemn, serious frame, realizing that He “readeth our thoughts, and trieth our hearts,” and that His saints and angels,”<sup>h</sup> even “a great cloud of

one should have fancied, that the incense of the Temple (which was a compound of several precious gums), made no other perfume than the spices would have done, had they been burnt one by one.”—*Thorn-dike. (Bishop Patrick on Prayer, p. 217.)*

*h.* The Apostle Paul, when declaring (1 Cor. xi, 10) that a woman should cover her head in time of Prayer, “because of the Angels,” certainly seems to intimate, that at such times these heavenly visitants are about us. So at least this passage was looked upon by the ancient Christians, and it gave them great encouragement to attend upon the public Prayers. The same idea is curiously stated by Origen in his comments on those words of the Psalmist —“the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him.” “It is probable” —says he —“that when many are assembled together sincerely to the glory of Christ, the angel of every one of them there pitcheth his tent, together with him who is committed to his charge and custody; so as to make a *double Church*, where the saints are

witnesses compass us about." This therefore is the very discipline we need, and by which the Church endeavors to have wrought into our souls, the spirit of holiness.

There is indeed a subduing influence in Prayer, which a careless world seems never to know. The very sound of "the Church-going bell," speaks to the heart, and recalls us from our earthly feelings. As its solemn tones fall upon the ear, they seem like a voice from eternity, telling us of realities, while we wander in a world of shadows. Beautiful therefore was that superstition of the Middle Ages, which ascribed to them the power of driving far off the Evil Spirits which gather about the path of man, to tempt him to sin. As the deep sound of the evening bell was heard upon the breeze, and the sweet tones of the Vesper Hymn floated indistinctly to the traveler's ear, his heart was strengthened within him, and he felt, that here at least, where that holy sound came, spiritual enemies had no power. Yet not entirely was this a superstition. The wild legends which embody it teach also a deep moral to the thoughtful mind, and one which a Poet of our own has set forth, arrayed gathered together; one Church of men, and another Church of angels."

in all that beauty with which genius can invest the truth.

“ I have read in the marvellous heart of man,  
That strange and mystic scroll,  
That an army of phantoms, vast and wan,  
Beleaguer the human soul.

Encamped beside Life's rushing stream,  
In Fancy's misty light,  
Gigantic shapes and shadows gleam  
Portentous through the night.

But when the solemn and deep Church bell,  
Entreats the soul to pray,  
The midnight phantoms feel the spell,  
The shadows sweep away.

Down the broad Vale of Tears afar,  
The spectral camp is fled ;  
Faith shineth as a morning star,  
Our ghastly fears are dead.”<sup>i</sup>

How wise then is that provision of the Church, by which she calls us to these oft-recurring prayers ! She wishes thus, to render us “ meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” It is for this reason too, that she so frequently in her Calendar commemorates the holy

i. Longfellow's *Beleaguered City*.

dead, who have already entered into their rest. Contracted indeed is the view of this subject which so many take, when they enquire, Why should we pay this reverence to "men of like passions with ourselves?" And yet do not these compose that "noble army," which gathers around the Christian pilgrim as he travels onward, and whom he may well remember as his bright examples? Is it not right therefore, as the year rolls round, that one by one they should meet him in the services of the Church, that he may thus be enabled to think of their self-denying labors, their holy lives, and their patient sufferings? The Church in this is but following the example of St. Paul, when in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, he summons up, as with a trumpet's voice, name after name of those departed worthies who had long gone to their reward. And since his day, how gloriously has the list been extended, as the Gospel dispensation presents its holy array of apostles, and saints, and just men made perfect, until the long and bright procession passes before us, stirring our hearts up to a holy emulation.

But their example is not all. It is thus that we are reminded also of the dignity of our warfare. The Christian is too apt, in times of de-

pression, to feel himself a solitary, and it may be, a derided traveler. He looks upon himself as standing isolated in a hostile world. These services then are like a chain, which connects him with the holy dead who have gone before. He finds, that he has inherited his privileges from martyrs and confessors — from kings of the earth, its princes, and its judges, who in their generation “fought the good fight,” and then were gathered into the Paradise of God. His feelings of loneliness pass away. He realizes, that he is one of a great company, which embraces in its ranks all that is pure and dignified in the universe, and his heart rejoices in “the communion of saints.”

“Thus, though oft depressed and lonely,  
All his fears are laid aside,  
If he but remembers only  
Such as these have lived and died.”

And here, we can not forbear quoting from one of the most admirable works of this generation —

j. The thought of the dead makes us gentle and child-like, and leads us to forget ourselves, as well it may. For we know that according to St. Paul's teaching the spirits of just men made perfect are not far from us. We are come to them, and they are

the only one we know, giving the portraiture of a Christian family — a passage showing the manner in which these Festivals can be profitably observed. “For example, I take up the character of St. Peter for my especial meditation, which most probably, but for this notice of it by the Church, I never should have done; at least, I should have rested content with the vague, transitory, and unpractical notions suggested in the course of turning over, amid a multitude of others in Scripture, the passages which relate to him. But now I turn it in every possible light, refer to the minutest incident, analyzing and composing, till I frame to myself an adequate conception of his character. I then examine myself by it, and

come to us. They can touch us, and we can touch them; they are gliding by every hour. The spirit has but ceased to act upon and through the body, and so we do not see them in their places. They keep threading in and out among us, going up and down, and moving round about us; especially, so we believe from St. John, in holy Churches where their bodies rest in hope. (Rev. vi.) They are the first ranks of the Church, who have gone before us in the Lord, so far as to be out of sight. They are beyond our view. They may see us; we can not see them.”—*Faber’s Tracts on the Offices of the Church.*

review his ardent and courageous spirit till I imbibe some portion of it myself, and discuss his temporary fall till I arrive at a wholesome fear of my own weakness ; and on coming to his restoration, so completely do I feel identified with him, I rejoice and glorify his blessed Master, and my own, as if I had been restored together with him. And, last of all, I look intently upon that death, which according to his Master's prediction he underwent, and prepare myself also to take up the Cross of my Lord, and fear Him, and not man. All these thoughts may have passed through my mind often before ; but it was in a floating, undirected, unpractical mass, and not arranged as now, in clusters, under suitable heads, tending to one definite end, and by the point given to them, leaving their impression distinct and deep, both on memory and feelings. Besides, by thus steadily following one train, I am led at last, to ideas on the subject, and combinations of ideas which had never before presented themselves ; and I experience with the increase of my spiritual knowledge an accession also of mental wealth. At a due interval arrives another festival, the centre of attraction to another class of thoughts, which had else been too loose and vague to produce any impression ;

these too I fix in permanence. In this manner I am carried round the year; my views grow clearer, my resolutions more firm; such days are to me indeed holy days; in them I find a secure repose for my thoughts from the vulgar turmoil of the world around, to which I return at least refreshed, and I hope I may add, improved.”<sup>k</sup>

The Church, it is true, in these services offers us no excitement. She never teaches that glowing devotion, (or what is miscalled devotion,) which on Sunday lifts its possessor up to the very gates of Heaven, yet during the week is never visible in his conduct. Her aim is to instruct us in a sober, constant, and Scriptural piety. She employs no spiritual whirlwind now and then to sweep over her, which when it has subsided, leaves her children during the remainder of the year, to sink back again to a death-like coldness, but she goes on the even tenor of her way, steadily building them up in a knowledge of the faith. Neither indeed does she present us with any novelties, for the prayers and praises in which we unite, have been heard in her services a long time, some of them for more than fourteen centuries.<sup>l</sup> They are a precious legacy, bequeathed

*k. Rectory of Valehead, p. 54.*

*l. For instance, the prayer of St. Chrysostom, at*



to us by ages which have gone. They are "the form of sound words" which our fathers used, and with which the dead in Christ were accustomed to worship a thousand years ago. Thus it is, that her voice is lifted up through all the changing year, and we are but prolonging that anthem of praise, which has always been heard in her courts. The very words we utter, carry us back to days when the faith of the Church was purified by suffering. They connect us in thought and Spirit with those of whom the world was not worthy, who have long since passed away to their reward.

Again — another reason why every Christian should avail himself of these services is, **THAT HE MAY DRAW DOWN A BLESSING UPON HIS CHURCH.** We meet at such times, to humble ourselves not merely as individuals, but also as a Church. In this respect, we have surely much to bewail for the close of the service. Also, the Doxologies, the Trisagion or cherubical hymn, Holy, Holy, Holy, &c., and the Magnificat. The Te Deum has been generally ascribed to St. Ambrose, although some learned men have disputed this. For a particular account of the most noted hymns in use in the service of the ancient Church, see Bingham's *Orig. Eccles.*, lib. xiv. chap. 2.

the time that is gone. Like Israel of old, we too may "remember our ways, and be ashamed." Compared with the opportunities placed in our hand, how little have we done as a Church, to advance the cause of pure and undefiled religion! With thousands in our own land straying into heresy and schism, and millions on the wastes of heathenism "perishing for lack of knowledge," how little through us has the glad news of our Redeemer's sacrifice been published through the earth, or the sweet incense of His name been borne to the hearts of the dying! Have we not sins then as a Church to confess? And when can we more appropriately remember these our deficiencies, than when we are preparing to celebrate that sacrifice, around which are gathered our own hopes of eternal life, and which was intended to bring salvation to all who will avail themselves of its benefits!

If we wish then, that the ultimate triumph of the Gospel should not be held back through any fault of ours, is it not well that we should call upon God for strength, to enable us to fulfill our recorded vows, and to realize the interest which we have in the spiritual welfare of our race? There is indeed no better instrument than prayer, to aid the progress of our Master's cause. When

we look over the world, and see how iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, we feel at times tempted to despond and to let the conflict go on. But Scripture teaches us a different lesson with regard to the power of prayer. St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians — “Brethren! pray for us, that the word of God may have free course and be glorified.” And in accordance with this, the Church directs us to offer up petitions “for all sorts and conditions of men.” She even instructs us to pray for spiritual blessings upon ourselves, only that they may be imparted to others also. The language of her Evening Anthem is — “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and show us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us.” And why? “That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.” We find then, that we also as a Church have, in this respect a duty to perform with regard to the advancement of our faith.

And here we would remark more particularly on the duty of presenting our petitions to God, for those who attend with us in the same sanctuary. When we remember how often the Gospel is proclaimed in our Churches, and that it is God’s own appointed means for publishing the

truth, we can not but ask, Why is it that so few receive it? Why do the majority of those who listen, still refuse to be reconciled to our Lord, or be numbered with his followers? Must there not be guilt resting on those who “profess and call themselves Christians,” that they do not petition Him to pour out upon our Churches “the healthful spirit of His grace?” If the voice of prayer were not restrained, we should witness no spiritual desolation, but “God, even our God, would give us his blessing.” Let those then who believe that they are “children of the light and of the day,” think how much they owe to the love of Him who hath called them to His service. Who made them to differ from the thousands around, who are still seeking to draw comfort from this vain world, and wasting their strength in pursuit of its fleeting shadows? Who opened their eyes to see the solemn realities of eternity, and put a new song in their mouth, filling them with the rich comforts of His grace? Let us think too of the state of those, who are still without the ark of safety—How blindly they are rushing on to an inheritance of woe—how they are standing in jeopardy every hour, reckless of the storm which is gathering against them—and our sympathies will be awakened in

their behalf. Then, we shall need no other inducement to “watch for one hour” with the people of God, where prayer is offered up, that we also may present that appropriate petition — “Return, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts: look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine, and the vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that Thou madest strong for Thyself.”

There is one other motive which pleads with us, to avail ourselves of the solemnities of this Season. It is the truth, THAT WE MAY NOT LIVE TO SEE AGAIN THE RETURN OF THIS PERIOD OF OUR ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR. This may be our last Lent on earth, to herald in either an eternal Festival in Heaven, or to be but the prelude to that “lamentation and mourning and woe,” in which the desolate spirit can look forward to no joyful Easter. But the reflection, that life is passing rapidly away, and that its continuance is uncertain, although often brought before us, is still one which to most, is any thing but familiar. The remembrance of it, as a fact, exerts but little practical influence over our thoughts and our conduct. We acknowledge it as a general truth, and yet silently make an exception in our own favor. Let us endeavor then, to bring it home

to our own hearts and consciences, as a reality in which we have a deep and fearful interest. And how solemn—how awakening should be the effect of the thought, that we may be passing through this period of improvement for the last time—that when the next year the people of the Lord are thus summoned to come up, and make ready for the celebration of His Passion, we may not hear the call! Then, our probation may have ended—our account be sealed up against the Great Day of moral retribution—and our graves in the quiet Churchyard, be growing green amidst the graves of our kindred. And yet, this is possible with all who witness the services of this season, and certain with regard to some. It would be strange indeed, if even among those who may read these pages, some should not be borne to their last resting place before twelve months have rolled round. Think of those who at this time last year sat in the same seats with us in the temple of God, but who have now departed forever. Can not memory recall the images of some who have since then passed from our own little circle to the silence of the tomb, and whose familiar forms and faces we shall see no more, until that mighty word goes forth, which heard on sea and land

shall call up the dust of the sepulchre to new life, and mould it again into its ancient shapes? Yes, the Destroyer has been among us, since last with joy we sang together our Easter anthem. In many a household there have been bitter lamentations for the dead; and a vacant seat by the hearth, and an added tombstone in the Churchyard are the sole earthly memorials of some, who in the weeks of the last year's Lent were often found in the house of God. The loved ones are not all here. Smiles of affection which once were ready to greet us, and tones which fell like music on our ears, have faded away from the earth. The dust has claimed its own, and our hearts even now turn in sorrow to the place of graves, where the dead so silently await our coming.

And of whom shall this history next be written? Do we all shrink from the question, and feel we can not bear to realize, that this may be the case with us? Do we close our ears, as the solemn tones of life's curfew-bell are heard, warning us of the gathering night? Oh, let us remember, that we have no exemption from this common lot, and that the Master may come in an hour when we look not for Him. With the flush of health upon the cheek, and the vigor of

manhood in the limbs, we may be unconsciously treading the edge of the crumbling precipice, about to be launched into Eternity.

—————“ Time is fleeting,  
And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still like muffled drums are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.”<sup>m</sup>

Let the determination then be strengthened within us, that while life lasts, we will neglect no opportunity of making ready for our solemn change—that if it should be decreed in the councils of Heaven, that we shall never again on earth witness this interesting season in the Church, this at least shall not be neglected, but we will repair to the House of God, there to pour out our souls in the prayer of penitence and faith.

Are not these then motives enough to induce us to take our part in these week-day services? Methinks our Lord is thus age after age, even from the garden of Gethsemane, lifting up to His faithful followers the voice alike of entreaty and of agony, saying unto them — “ What ! could ye not watch with me one hour ! ” And is it not our business here, to train ourselves for the ceaseless worship of Heaven ? Are we then gaining

*m. Longfellow's Psalm of Life.*



this spirit of prayer which will render us “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?” Let us examine our own hearts, and scrutinize our affections, lest we may be deceived, and the spirituality and holiness of the Christian be still wanting in our breasts. Neither is it all that is necessary, merely to be bodily present in the House of God, for we may at the same time “be absent in spirit,” and thus in our best services be accumulating guilt. He whom we mock with the offering of the lips while the heart is far from him, will say to us, as He did to His ancient people — “The calling of assemblies I can not away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.” The world therefore must be shut out — the spirit of devotion must be with us — or we are not truly watching with our Lord.

And should there chance to rest upon these pages, the eye of any one who does not profess to be a disciple of our once suffering but now glorified Master, and who therefore may feel disposed to pass by this appeal as being in his case inapplicable, we would address to him also a single inquiry. Have you no need of prayer — no necessity for that atonement on the Cross, to which these services point us forward? If such are your feelings, the disclosures of a coming day

will show, that you have been the victim of a fatal delusion. We look beyond the few remaining days of this fleeting life — we stand with our fellow men before the bar of God — we behold “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” — but what is the condition of those, who have no interest in his Redemption? For them there is no song of triumph — no victor’s crown. They are arrayed before their Judge in speechless despair. The neglected opportunities of earth are rising in their memories, and they feel that they would give the universe, were it possible, for “one hour” of that probation which once they trifled away. The future offers to them no gleam of hope, but shrinking from “the Great White Throne, and the face of Him that sitteth thereon,” they commence the desolate travel of Eternity — lost — undone forever.

We would entreat you then, O restless and disappointed child of immortality! to avail yourself of this solemn season, when all things invite you to thoughtfulness and prayer. Turn away from this decaying, perishing world, whose enchantments only mock your sight, and whose promised blessings fade and disappear while you seek to grasp them, and gain in their place, “the peace which passeth understanding” — the calm

and solid happiness which our faith only can bestow. It is to be found—not in feverish and vain desires—not in the aspirings of wild ambition—not amid the rush and hurry of this busy life—but in the whispers of an approving conscience, and in silent communion with your God. Come then, and in a spirit of earnest supplication, pray Him to blot out the dark record of the past, and to strengthen you for His service during the years which may yet remain to you on earth. Come, before life is departing, and the terror-stricken soul seeks in vain for a single hour in which to make its peace with Him. Come, before the darkness of the grave gathers around, and the despairing cry is heard—“Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.”



## Good Friday.

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Low bow'd Thy head convulsed, and droop'd in death,  
Thy voice sent forth a sad and wailing cry;  
Slow struggled from Thy breast the parting breath,  
And every limb was wrung with agony.  
That head whose veil-less blaze  
Filled angels with amaze,  
When at that voice sprang forth the rolling suns on high.  
*Milman's "Hymn to the Savior."*



## IV.

### Good Friday.

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“And they crucified Him.” Simple yet solemn words! telling in this little expression of the most fearful event which has ever taken place upon this globe, since at the hour of its first creation “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, as they joined in that glorious jubilee. And how vividly does this short sentence bring before us that terrible scene—fit conclusion to the long years of self-denial and sorrow—when the Son of God bowed Himself upon the Cross, and with an agony of which no man can conceive, passed the gates of Death! The imagination calls up the mighty crowd which had gathered to that spectacle—the jibe and scorn of the Jewish priests, as they inflamed the bigoted and urged

on the shrinking — the whirl and roar of scoffing thousands, as that living flood poured out from the Holy City, and rolled around the sacred Mount. And far above them, “lifted up to be seen of all men,” on the only throne which His rebellious subjects gave, was the promised Messiah, hearing even in death their mad ingratitude and cruel tauntings. Yet on that patient sufferer’s brow, where the inspiration of the Divinity and the agonies of Humanity struggled together, we may believe, there beamed an expression of the loftiest triumph. He felt, that even in dissolution He was winning the noblest victory, and gaining immortality for the countless tribes of His fellow men.

As the hours passed on, popular passion was stirred up to its wildest excess. The rude uproar and furious execrations of myriads filled the air, and mingled with the low, deep tones of our expiring Master, while He prayed for His enemies, or commended His soul to God. At length, there rang without the walls of Jerusalem that last, loud cry, which proclaimed to a wondering universe, that all was finished — the mighty offering made — and that “through death our Lord had destroyed him that had the power of death.” Then it was, that even inanimate nature



seemed to sympathise in his struggle. The sun veiled its face, and darkness covered the land. The earth reeled to and fro, beneath the earthquake's shock. And not on the living only did this day of strange revelations produce its influence. Even the last resting places of the dead were rent asunder, that on the morning of the first day they too might come forth with their risen Lord. Then, even the bodies of the slumbering saints started from their graves, and glided through the city where once they dwelt. Dim and livid forms, still wearing the cerements of the tomb—bearing yet its fearful impress—in this breathing world, yet not *of* it—they “appeared to many,” as it were, claiming again brotherhood with the living, and teaching them by their own ghastly presence, the earliest proofs of a resurrection. Such were the terrors of the first Good Friday.

Is it strange then, that the members of the early Church, with awed and chastened spirits, kept this holy day, and felt that deep indeed should be their self-abasement at this season of their Lord's mysterious agonies? They considered it as invested with a peculiar solemnity, and even those who might have been negligent during the rest of Lent, religiously observed this

day, as the one on which the Bridegroom was taken from them.<sup>a</sup> And in the same spirit should we act now. "On this day"—says Bishop Hobart—"all the pursuits of business should be suspended; the service of the Church devoutly attended; and the intervals of public worship devoted to holy meditation on the sufferings of Christ, and to other pious exercises. By abstinence, self-denial, and humiliation, we should seek to testify our sympathy in the sufferings of our Lord, and our lively sorrow for our sins which occasioned His sufferings. There can be no greater evidence of insensibility and ingratitude, than to spend the day sacred to the sufferings of Christ, in the usual pursuits of business or pleasure."

Is he then keeping it as he should, who perhaps only escapes from his usual occupation in the court room or the counting house, for a single hour to attend the services of the Church? Are his thoughts in a proper state for commemorating his Lord's passion, when he passes at once to the sanctuary from the noise and turmoil of business, with all its restless and disquieting cares about him? And has he profited as he

a. See Bingham's *Orig. Eccles.*, lib. xxi, ch. 1, sec. 1.

should by these holy services, when he hurries back at once to the anxieties of this working world? No — let the merchant desert for the day, the mart of business — let the professional man close his office — and the world will begin to believe, that this is a season holy to the Lord. Then the words of our Liturgy will come home to them with power, and sink into their hearts, and they will realize more deeply the mighty debt they owe to Him who died for them.

And how beautifully appropriate are all the services which the Church has prescribed for this solemn season! The Psalms for the day, composed by David in times of sorrow and distress, have always been considered as having a still higher reference to the sufferings and death of Christ. The *first lesson* for the morning (Gen. xxii), by narrating the intended sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah, points with the voice of prophecy to the coming agonies of the Son of God, which ages after were to be endured upon the same spot; while the *second lesson* (John xviii), brings a portion of our Lord's sufferings before us, in the simple yet touching record of the beloved disciple who was himself a witness. The *first lesson* for the evening (Isaiah lii, ver. 13, and chap. liii), contains the most minute and

striking prophecy of the passion of our Lord, which is to be found in the whole range of the predictions in the Old Testament, while the *second lesson* (Phil. ii), contrasts the humiliation of Christ with his pre-existent dignity, and from this example inculcates the virtues of unity and humbleness of mind. Such are the truths which are now brought before us, and remembering the inestimable benefits which we have obtained by this one great sacrifice of our Lord, we can not but feel that this fast is appropriately named *Good Friday*. The recollections which gather around it may be those of sorrow, yet mingled with them is the loftiest triumph, for at this period it was that man's great redemption was wrought out.

The ordinary themes connected with the sacrifice of our Lord are familiar to all who "profess and call themselves Christians," and need not be discussed in a work of this kind. They form the very foundation of all religious teaching. We will therefore endeavor to bring forward one point which is generally less understood — **THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE FROM THE SUFFERER IN THE HOUR OF HIS GREATEST NEED.** And we have selected this from the belief, that it furnishes the most strange

feature in all the array of His agony. Overwhelming as were the sorrows which gathered around the Son of Man in the time of His deepest degradation and shame, there were none that can be compared with this. When His death cry — “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — rang in the ears of the astonished spectators, it proclaimed that a new and most bitter ingredient had been added to His cup of misery.

And here we would observe, that we can never fully conceive of the amount of our Lord’s sufferings. We have not capacity for comprehending their reality and boundless extent. Our narrow conceptions can never picture to us the unutterable sorrows of an infinite mind. Although of course His Divine nature suffered not, yet its very presence and union with his human nature, endowed the latter with capabilities of agony which no mere mortal could ever possess. Even His boundless knowledge — enabling Him to look forward with certainty to all that was at hand — placed Him in a condition for enduring unspeakable anguish of soul. The wide interval then which separates us from our Lord, necessarily renders our views of all that concerns Him, partial and defective. “We see but in part,”

and of course, "we know but in part." It is one of those subjects of a spiritual nature which we can not grasp. As we are unable to attain to an understanding of the inconceivable bliss which our Lord now inherits, so we can as little explain the depth of agony to which once he sank. Much must be left to humble faith. We must look upon it as a mystery which perhaps in another state of being, with enlarged faculties, may be clear to us.

It is for this reason that we are naturally accustomed to dwell most upon the mere physical and bodily sufferings of our Lord. These we can in some measure imagine. We see the Cross erected before us — the torn and agonized body — the parching thirst — the crown of thorns pressed on the bleeding brow — and the spear thrust into the side. All these things a mere mortal might endure, and they come therefore within the range of our comprehension. But beyond this there is a deeper gulf, into which we seldom send our thoughts forward. The soul also had its sufferings, which we believe no words can adequately describe. We gather this from the simple narrative of Scripture. When it speaks of His mental anguish, the writers seem to be aware that all human language is utterly

insufficient. How strong therefore are the expressions they select, and what a depth of meaning are they evidently endeavoring to express! Their words signify the greatest possible extremity of sorrow, and anxiety, and distress. "His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." A dark cloud gathered over Him. His earnest prayer was—"Father, save me from this hour." He seems even deprived of those consolations which good men usually enjoy in the hour of their final struggle, and which enable them to triumph in the prospect of approaching dissolution. But to what can we ascribe this state of despondency to which He was reduced except to the withdrawal of the Divine Presence, by which God has promised to uphold His faithful children in tribulation, and from the enjoyment of which His own Son was cut off, when "the sorrows of death compassed Him, and the pains of Hell gat hold upon Him."

In attempting then to enlarge our knowledge of this mysterious subject, as far as it has been revealed by the word of God, we would remark, *that by the withdrawal of the Divine Presence is not meant, that the intimate union between the Divine and human natures was dissolved.* When on his coming into the world, the Divinity as-

sumed a mortal body, a union was formed which was indissoluble. It subsisted during all His toilsome wanderings through Judea, in His want, and deprivation, and sorrow, and even on the Cross it did not desert Him. It remained, to give dignity to His sufferings. It rendered the victim worthy to be “a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.”<sup>b</sup> But it was the comfortable assurance of its presence which was withdrawn, in that fearful hour when most it was needed.

If however you ask the way in which this was

b. Hooker in one place in a single passage puts this point in a clear light, when referring to some of the ancient controversies with respect to it. “Theodoret disputeth, with great earnestness, that ‘God’ can not be said to suffer. But he thereby meaneth Christ’s *Divine Nature* against Appollinarius, which held even Deity itself passible. Cyril on the other side against Nestorius as much contendeth, that whosoever will deny ‘very God’ to have suffered death, doth forsake the faith, which, notwithstanding to hold, were Heresy, if the name of God in this assertion did not import, as it doth, *the Person of Christ*, who being verily God, suffered death, but in the flesh, and not in that substance for which the name of God is given Him.”—*Eccles. Polity*. lib. v, sec. 53.



done, we answer, we can not tell. God has not revealed to us the manner in which it was effected. He only informs us, that His crucified Son was for a time deprived of the bright beams of that Divinity which had taken up its abode within Him—that while He still continued to be God as well as man, there was no present consciousness or feeling of His own perfections. It seems as if feeble humanity was left for a time to bear alone, the almost insupportable load which was crushing it down. Beyond this we know nothing. We can not explain the way in which the union of the two natures was at first formed, nor can we fully comprehend the manner in which the suspension of the Divine Presence took place. We see only its effects, in the mental agony which its departure produced.

The next inquiry then which arises is, with regard to *the reason* of this withdrawal. It was evidently, we think, to place our Lord in a situation which qualified Him for deeper suffering. While the inspirations of the Divinity were burning brightly within Him, He could not drink to its dregs that bitter cup which was put to His lips. There was a consolation and an ineffable bliss of which He must be deprived, that He

might be enabled to reach the very extremity of woe.

This is a truth which scarcely needs to be enforced. We know that God is the fountain of all joy and consolation, and the more nearly we are united to Him, the greater is our happiness. "In His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore." It is the enjoyment of this bright vision, which imparts such extacy to the saints in glory, and should, even for a single moment, a dark veil be drawn, cutting them off from its contemplation, they would at once droop in sorrow. To our Lord therefore, mere bodily sufferings, grievous as they were, could have been comparatively but of little moment, had He been animated and upheld by the presence of the Divinity within. But this was not allowed Him, for the grief He was to endure was the accumulation of every sorrow which could be heaped upon Him—so fearful was the ransom to be paid for us. God therefore forsook Him, and He was left in the depth of despondency. Such we believe to be the reason of this mysterious event. It was to qualify our Surety, to bear the whole burden which was to be laid upon Him, and to say, in the words of

the ancient prophet—"Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of His fierce anger."

Again—let us look at this deprivation to our Lord in another respect—*its strangeness*. It was the withdrawal of that which He had ever before possessed. Before the world was, even through the countless ages of the past eternity, His had ever been "the fullness of the Godhead." He had ever shared in all that inexpressible delight which must be the attendant of Divinity. And even when on earth, we have no reason to suppose, that hitherto its beams had been obscured, or the sensible evidence of its presence taken away. The Spirit, we are told, was poured out upon Him "without measure," and we read in every action which He performed, and in every word which He spake, the proof that it was done through the promptings of His Higher nature. As therefore the *manner* of His existence during this time is incomprehensible, so also does the bliss which it afforded Him, transcend our utmost thoughts. But now, for a season this was taken away, and the very height of happiness to which it had always before raised Him, now deepened the woe, to which by its loss He was reduced,

His feelings could only find utterance in that plaintive exclamation which was wrung from Him — “Eli, Eli, lama, sabachthani, that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me !” Yet in this you perceive the strangeness of the deprivation. He who had been God from all eternity, now for the first time felt Himself deserted by the present influence of the Deity. He felt, that in suffering at least, He was nothing but a man.

But let us illustrate this point by something more within the sphere of our comprehension. Take an angel, who from the moment of his creation, has always rejoiced in the presence of God, and let the light of his Maker’s countenance be withdrawn from him. Indescribable would be the wretchedness which in such a case would overwhelm that bright Intelligence, when the beatific vision was removed. Yet we think, that the darkest feature in his sufferings — that which would force him to feel them with the greatest intenseness — would be, the very strangeness of his situation — the fact that it was something which he had never before experienced. Now such, only in an infinitely greater degree, was the case with our Lord. For a brief time, He was left to suffer alone. It was the very

climax of His misery — the hour of His deepest humiliation, which was soon however to give place to joy and triumph.

But when He now looks back upon it from His throne of glory, think you, that any thing like regret is felt, for the pain He endured — the fiery trial through which He passed? No — we know there can not be. As the number of the Elect gather into the Paradise of God, and He beholds in these ransomed spirits the prize for which He contended, widely different emotions must fill His breast. He sees in them “the travail of His soul, and is satisfied.” He feels no sorrow that he trod the wine-press of God’s wrath. He judges it worth all His trials and sufferings, that He should lead up many sons and daughters to glory, and therefore He is contented to have borne all that He did. He finds an ample recompense in the sight of the happiness of the redeemed, and in the glad rejoicings of the unnumbered millions, who but for His sorrows would have been the heirs of eternal woe.

Again — we would look at this withdrawal of the Divine Presence in one other point of view — *the greatness of the sorrow it occasioned*. We find no record of any alleviation afforded our Master in this hour of intense bitterness. An

angel was indeed sent down, but we are told, it was to "strengthen Him." Not a word is said about conferring comfort. It was to endow Him with the ability to suffer. Now the truth is an obvious one, that just in proportion to the degree of holiness we have, will be our delight in the presence of God, and of course, the depth also of distress we shall feel, when it is withdrawn from us. The kingly Poet of Israel could exclaim — "My soul thirsteth for Thee, O God; my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." The individual, whose heart has been sanctified by the Holy Ghost, will feel that the very existence of his spiritual life depends upon the continuance of this comfort, and will mourn its absence in bitterness. How deep then must have been the sorrow of our Lord, who was without sin, when this evil befel Him, and He was no longer cheered by the Divine presence! We, in the midst of our imperfections and blindness, can never realize the emotions of a Being of perfect holiness, at such a change. It was the removal of the sun from the system. It was condemning Him to darkness and despair.

But there was more than the mere withdrawal of God's presence. There was also poured out upon Him, that just retribution of the Almighty,

which was merited by the race whose nature He had assumed. “He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.” He had placed Himself to endure the punishment of transgressions, which otherwise would have descended upon us, and therefore He was weighed down by the load of divine justice against sin. He stood up to be a Surety, to pay the penalty due from fallen man—to bear the curse and shame—and He suffered them to the uttermost. The very consciousness then of this, must have immeasurably aggravated His anguish, when He felt its most fearful effect—the Almighty, as it were, retiring from Him, and abandoning Him to darkness.

Another necessary consequence of this withdrawal was, that it left Him exposed to the efforts and temptations of the fallen spirits. We find, that when Satan first assaulted Him in the wilderness, he was easily repulsed, for then our Lord was animated with a consciousness of the presence of Divinity, and His communion with

God was uninterrupted. But when this change passed over His soul, and He was forsaken by the Father, then He was left open and exposed to all the arts of the Evil One. The malice and subtlety of that fallen spirit—still powerful even in his apostacy—were exerted to the utmost, and thus literally, “His soul became an offering for sin.” It was this which He himself intimated, when He said to His enemies among the Jews—“When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me, but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” As if he had told them—“During the former part of my ministry, I was shielded by divine power. You could effect nothing against me. But now, that aid is withdrawn, and you and the powers of darkness have your hour to tempt and try me. You can wreak your vengeance on my body, and my spiritual enemies on my soul.” We can not indeed tell the extent of influence which these apostate spirits are able to exert, but we know that it must be great. And we may well believe that all the strength of our Great Adversary was put forth in his last, decisive struggle with the son of God. Once he had been foiled, but now the contest was renewed, in the very crisis of this world’s fate, when its



salvation was on the eve of completion, and all the dearest interests of the countless tribes of man were at stake. We may be sure then, that no weapon which the Great Enemy of our race could wield, was left unemployed. Alone our Redeemer passed through the fiery furnace, “and of the people there was none with him.” Alone He baffled his foes, and wrought out that triumph in which through all ages His followers are to share.

Such then we believe is the reason, why this also was added as the most bitter ingredient in the cup of our Master’s sorrows—the strangeness of the change to Him—and the greatness of the suffering which it caused. Can not we perceive therefore in this particular, how widely the agonies of our Lord are separated from those which could be endured by any mere mortal? With the early martyrs, the pain was confined to the body. The mind was at peace—nay, more than this—was cheered and elevated by the sensible comforts of the Spirit, so as to be able, even with exultation to encounter death in its most fearful forms. It was, the mortal frame convulsed with agony, but the spirit departing in hope. Yet our Lord was left, desolate and forsaken, and in no other way can we account

for the exceeding sorrow which weighed Him down, than by referring it to His agony of mind under that additional affliction of which we have endeavored to speak. We see then, how utterly impossible it is for us to measure the length and breadth of His sufferings, when we compare them with human feelings and affections. There is an unfathomable depth in His mysterious sorrow, which places it far beyond our comprehension. We can no more understand it, than we can the Divine nature. And it was this view of the subject which probably induced the ancient Greek Church, to insert among the prayers of its Liturgy, the appropriate petition — “By thine unknown sufferings, O Lord, have mercy upon us.”<sup>c</sup>

But yet this consideration should only awaken us to greater gratitude. If his sorrows were infinite, how great the wonder and amazement which should fill our minds, when we remember, that they were for us! They were the speaking and powerful evidences of that “love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” Let us endeavor then at present, when the services of the Church

c. Διὰ τῶν ἀγνώστων σου παθημάτων, Κύριε ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς.

especially call us to this duty, to meditate upon these things, until our holiest affections are kindled into exercise, and the voice of praise breaks forth from our lips. This will be the subject of our contemplations in that coming world of bliss to which we trust we are hastening forward. There, where the treasures of Divine love are unfolded before us, we shall find in the sufferings of the Son of God, a theme to which the heart will ever return with deepened interest as the ages of eternity roll by. Let us begin then now, to anticipate the employments of the heavenly world. We can (to use the beautiful imagery of Bunyan), ascend the Delectable Mountains, and from afar, by the strong eye of faith catch a glimpse of the portals of the Celestial City, and as the anthem of its shining inhabitants floats softly to our ear, strive even now, to add our voices to their glorious melody. We know the burden of that "new song," and while still in our earthly state, may familiarize our minds with it. As the years of our pilgrimage pass away, and the time of our final retribution draws nigh, we can learn to meditate with delight upon that sacrifice, through the unspeakable agonies of which, we have attained all our hopes of pardon here and of glory hereafter.

Here then is our trust. Our Lord hath met the King of Terrors — hath died — hath passed the portals of the tomb. “Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death.” It was breaking his sceptre, and depriving him of all claim to the countless millions who else would have been his prey. Why then should human nature shrink back in dread from the path, over which the Master hath trodden? Why should we so often stand “shivering on the brink, afraid to launch away?” Why should we array the Last Messenger who releases us from our warfare, with every attribute of terror, till the heart quails at his approach? Even from the twilight knowledge of an ancient and heathen philosophy, we may learn a better lesson. There he was represented as but the twin brother of Sleep, as if he only called us to a slumber deeper and longer than that which each night overtakes us. There, in the lands in which this mythology prevailed, on many a mouldering tomb is still found the sculptured image of the Angel of Death, and we behold him in the form of a youth, his wings folded in repose, and his torch inverted. All is serene, peaceful and beautiful.

Surely then the Christian, to whom all is cer-

tainty, may well say, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Trusting in no dim speculations, he "knows in whom he has believed, and that He is able to keep that which he has committed to Him against that day." Standing by the Cross on Calvary, the darkness rolls away from the landscape which stretches out before him, and he sees his path plainly marked. It passes indeed through the wilderness, and down into the dark valley of the Shadow of Death, and over the troubled waters of Jordan, yet he traces it up to the gates of the New Jerusalem—the Eternal City of his God. This then is his hope, which should enable him to greet the Monarch of the Tomb with a calmness which no earthly philosophy could ever give. He realizes that "through the grave and gate of death he shall pass to his glorious resurrection, for His merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, Jesus Christ our Lord."<sup>d</sup>

But yet, all our thoughts are not those of joy and triumph when we dwell on this great Sacrifice. Sorrowful emotions also mingle with them. If every promise of eternal life is bound up in the crucifixion of our Lord, then what must we think of those, who seek no interest in His Redemp-

*d. Collect for Easter-Even.*

tion? In vain for them were the sufferings — the scourge — the nails — and the Cross — for they have rejected the precious inheritance which thus was purchased for the fallen sons of men. “In vain” did we say? It was more than this. These thrilling scenes will add a deeper horror to their condemnation, for in this manner the means of safety were placed within their reach, but they rejected it, and trampled the blood of the covenant beneath their feet. As they contemplate then the sorrows of our Lord, let them think whether that misery can light, to redeem from which He consented to suffer so fearfully. Let them remember the intensity of His agony, when He uttered the plaintive exclamation — “My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?” — and the view may awaken them from their deathlike apathy.

In a different spirit indeed, this same cry has often been uttered since, by thousands in their dying hour. This bitter lamentation has quivered on the lips of many a sinner, as the shadows of the grave gathered around him. It was not, as with our Lord, the temporary withdrawal of God’s favor, but his everlasting departure. He forsook the infatuated mortal who had sinned away his day of grace, that he might reap the retribution

which his own deeds had worked out. With him, this agonizing cry was the wail of a lost spirit, as its ceaseless woe was commencing. It was quenching the last ray which brightened his path, leaving the desolate immortal to begin the travel of Eternity in darkness and despair.

Thus it is, that from every side of us there comes a voice of entreaty and of warning. Not from the word of God alone — not from the Cross of His son — are the only incitements to Christians' earnestness to be drawn. The wakeful, spiritual eye may read their solemn appeals in many a scene which meets us as we journey on our daily path. From the parting agonies of each careless wanderer from his Lord, as he enters eternity "not knowing the things which shall befall him there," is heard the startling warning — "Be watchful, O pilgrim through an evil world — gird up thy loins and hasten onward — be earnest, be diligent — for the work to be accomplished is great, while the day is passing away, and the shadows of the evening are stretching forward."





## Easter Even.

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At length the worst is o'er, and Thou art laid  
    Deep in thy darksome bed;  
All still and cold beneath yon dreary stone  
    Thy sacred form is gone;  
Around those lips where power and mercy hung  
    The dews of death have clung;  
The dull earth o'er Thee, and thy foes around  
Thou sleep'st a silent corse, in funeral fetters wound.

*Keble's Easter Eve.*



## V.

### Easter Even.

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We have now reached the last of those appropriate services in which the Church calls us to unite during this solemn Season. When for weeks we had chastened our souls by fasting and prayer, that we might be prepared to contemplate the fearful agonies of the Son of God, we were led by the services of Passion Week to the Hill of Calvary, and there beheld our Lord expiring on the Cross. But to-day a new scene in this fearful Tragedy is unfolded before us. The crucifixion is over—the Son of Man has passed the gates of Death—His body been pierced by the soldier's spear, to render it certain that no life remained—and then, the inanimate remains given by Pilate to Joseph of Arimathea, to be buried as he would. They have been deposited

in his own new tomb in the garden—the stone sealed—and the Roman guard placed around it, “lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away.” There they are resting, while many are looking anxiously for the things that should come after.

Strange indeed must have been “the searchings of heart,” which took place among those who thus awaited in trembling expectation, the further developments of this mystery. With the disciples it was indeed a day of trouble and suspense, when conflicting emotions filled their minds. They scarcely could have known what to think or believe. Confiding in the Messiahship of their Lord, as they witnessed His oft repeated miracles, they had “trusted that this Jesus was He who should have redeemed Israel.” Yet now their lofty hopes, both for themselves and for their nation, seemed to be interred in His sepulchre. “Slow of heart,” they could not yet reconcile the facts of His sufferings and His triumph, or learn that the Redeemer was to pass on to His kingly throne through the furnace of affliction.

And on Mount Moriah, and even within the precincts of the temple, there must also have been anxious and excited hearts. The rites of

that Jewish Sabbath were kept as usual — clouds of incense filled the Sanctuary — the smoke of the morning and evening sacrifice rose in the air above the Holy City — and countless thousands of worshipers as heretofore thronged the courts. Yet among those crowds must there not have been many who thought with fear on the deeds of the previous day, and now shuddered at the remembrance of that terrible prayer their own lips had uttered — “His blood be on us and on our children?” Even the priests and rulers must have trembled at the recollection of their own successful violence. They could not forbear to connect His death with the unusual signs which had convulsed all nature. In the very recesses of the Temple, the veil was rent by no mortal hands, and the sacred mysteries of the Holiest exposed to view — a fearful evidence that the Divinity was forsaking His accustomed abode. Did they behold these things without dismay? Did they minister as usual with untroubled minds? Did the former infatuation continue, and the triumph of having removed a rival who led away the people from them, sustain their courage amidst all these mysterious occurrences? We can not believe it. “That Sabbath day was an

high day," yet it was no time of festive joy with the rulers of the Jewish nation.

And could we have looked into the spiritual world, and beheld those ranks of fallen angels who carry on a ceaseless warfare against Him, whose praises once they sang with harp and anthem, we believe that there also dismay would have been seen. The long years of temptation and conflict with the Messiah were over, and these His mightiest enemies—to work whose will the Priests and Sadducees were but instruments—had apparently triumphed when they silenced His voice forever. Yet in this, the moment of seeming victory, must not the Arch-Adversary have felt a consciousness of defeat, as the exclamation, "It is finished," proclaimed to him not only that the sufferings of the Son of God were over, but also that his own sceptre was broken, and the fancied sovereignty forever wrested from his grasp? May not the truth have then first dawned upon a waiting universe, that Christ having "died for our sins," was about to be "raised up again for our justification?" We can not speak of these things with certainty; yet when we remember the intense interest with which all orders of spiritual beings marked the unfolding of this mighty scheme of

redemption, we may well believe that its consummation must have fallen with a crushing weight upon those apostate angels who had been striving to defeat it, and at the same time awakened to its loftiest exercise, the joy and adoration of the myriads who still gathered about the throne.

It is this interval of suspense—this time of doubt and fear among men — when the body of our Lord was still in the tomb, and His soul had gone to “the place of departed spirits” — that is known as Easter Even. It is the Saturday, between the day of the crucifixion, and the morning of Easter Sunday. In the early Church it was kept as a solemn fast, being the only Saturday throughout the year which was thus observed, for even in Lent this day was a festival together with the Lord’s day which followed. Thus we find it ordered in the Apostolic Constitutions, as being in accordance with the established custom of the Church in that age — “Let as many as are able, fast the Friday and the Sabbath,” (that is Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath) “throughout, eating nothing till the cock-crowing in the morning. But if any can not join both days together in one continued fast, let him however keep the Sabbath a fast, for the Lord speak-

ing of Himself said, ‘ when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, in those days shall they fast.’ ”<sup>a</sup>

The night of this day, as (we learn from the next chapter of the Apostolic Constitutions), was spent as a solemn Vigil, when they assembled together for the performance of divine service, reading the Scripture, prayer, and preaching. There they continued until midnight, and many even remained until the cock-crowing. “It was a tradition among the Jews” — says St. Jerome — “that Christ would come at midnight, as He did upon the Egyptians at the time of the Passover. Thence, I think, the Apostolical Custom came, not to dismiss the people on the Paschal Vigil before midnight, expecting the coming of Christ; after which time presuming on security, they keep the day a festival.”<sup>b</sup> At a later period, when the Church had vanquished the power of ancient Paganism, and begun to put on her robes of power, this Vigil was kept with great pomp. Constantine — as Eusebius tells us, in his life of that emperor — “set up lofty pillars of wax to burn as torches all over the city, and lamps burn-

*a. Patres. Apos. Cotel* vol. i, p. 325.

*b. Bingham's Orig. Eccles*, lib. xxi, chap. 1, sec. 32.



ing in all places, so that the night seemed to out-shine the sun at noon-day.”

The Church has therefore still continued to command the observance of this day, although the state of society and the forms of life in this age require that the manner in which it is done should be modified.<sup>c</sup> The services which have been provided, are marked by the same wisdom which can be discerned in all the arrangements of our venerable Church. In the beautiful Collect for the day, we offer up our humble petitions, “that as we are baptised into the death of our blessed Savior Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections, we may be buried with him ; and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resur-

c. The writer has been accustomed for several years, to hold the last Lent service on Easter Even, at 5 p. m., and believes that not one among the week-day services of the Church is better calculated to arrest the attention. That Vesper hour of quiet, when the cares of the busy week are over, in the waning twilight, as the day is softly fading into darkness, seems naturally to harmonize with our feelings of devotion. Then, in solemn meditation we can look back at the services which are gone, and forward to the great Festival of the morrow.

rection, for His merits, who died and was buried, and rose again for us, Jesus Christ our Lord." The Epistle, from St. Peter, containing that mysterious passage concerning our Lord's "preaching unto the spirits in prison," seems evidently selected by the Church as referring to the condition of His soul during this period; while the Gospel clearly describes His burial, and the care that was taken to "make the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

With the future history of our Lord's body, we are all well acquainted. We know how on the next morning He burst the bands of death, and came forth from the tomb, and then after mingling with His disciples for forty days, ascended up visibly into Heaven. But the question, Where was the human soul of our Master during this period? is one which most of His followers are not so well prepared to answer. We reply therefore, it was in the INTERMEDIATE STATE, and to a discussion of this subject we intend to devote the remainder of these pages. We have selected it, because although one most important to us, there is probably no truth asserted in the Creed, which is so little understood.

The faith of the Church then with respect to the doctrine is briefly this — that while the hour

of death decides irreversibly the condition of the spirit, so that "they which are holy will be holy still," and for the wicked there will remain no more sacrifice for sin, neither can it be purged away by offering for ever, yet the just do not at once enter into Heaven, nor do the lost descend immediately to their eternal prison. They go to an intermediate state, where they await the last judgment. There indeed the righteous are in happiness, and the wicked in misery, through all the ages which intervene; yet the one can not have "the fullness of joy," nor the other suffer the extremity of their destined misery, until their souls are once more united to their bodies. This takes place at the second coming of our Lord. At that time, the spiritual and earthly parts of our nature will be again brought into union, and the mighty army of the dead gather before the Great White Throne. Then, the Books will be opened — the final sentence be pronounced — the gates of Heaven, and the dreary prison house of the lost, unclose to receive their appointed occupants — and the spirits of all who have ever lived, commence the travel of Eternity.

In endeavoring to state the proofs on which we rest our believe in this doctrine, we naturally turn first to *the inspired word of God*. For, as

Lord Bacon has well remarked — “ A knowledge of the soul must in the end be bounded by religion, or else it will be subject to deceit and delusion : for as the substance of the soul in the creation was not extracted out of the mass of heaven and earth by the benediction of a ‘producat,’ but was immediately inspired by God, so it is not possible that it should be otherwise than by accident, subject to the laws of Heaven and earth, which are the subject of philosophy ; and therefore the true knowledge of the nature and state of the soul, must come by the same inspiration that gave the substance.”<sup>d</sup>

We learn then most plainly from Scripture, that the souls of the just do not, (as some in all ages have vainly imagined,) sleep with their bodies in utter insensibility, until the morning of the resurrection. Every intimation there given us with regard to our spiritual nature, confirms the truth which reason teaches, that “consciousness must be a necessary attribute of a spirit in a disembodied state.” Samuel was summoned up from his place of repose, evidently returning reluctantly to the cares of this world, and his inquiry was—“Why hast thou disquieted me, to

*d. Advancement of Learning.* Bacon’s Works, vol. ii, p. 170, Montague’s edit.

bring me up?" Every circumstance of the narrative too shows, that the spirit of Samuel was truly evoked. Saul evidently believed it, and the sacred penman records it, as if stating an actual occurrence. "And Saul"—says he—"perceived that it was Samuel," and "Samuel said," etc. The son of Sirach also, who is thought to have written two centuries before the Christian era, expresses himself on this topic with the same unhesitating confidence. After giving a brief account of Samuel's life and character, he adds—"And after his death he prophesied and showed the King his end, and lift up his voice from the earth in prophecy, to blot out the wickedness of the people."<sup>e</sup> Josephus too in relating the story, does not betray the slightest suspicion that it was not in truth the soul of Samuel conversing with Saul.<sup>f</sup> We are warranted therefore from this circumstance, not only in drawing an inference that the souls of the departed are in a state of consciousness, but also that this was an article in the popular creed of the Jewish nation. In the same way Moses and Elias appeared on the Mount of Transfigura-

*e. Eccles. xlvi, 20.*

*f. Antiq. lib. vi, ch. 15.*

tion, and “talked with our Lord,” as being spirits evidently endowed with all those powers which reason teaches us must belong to them.

The same truth is taught by the Apostle Paul, when he asserts — “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present,” (or conversant) “with the Lord.” And again he declares — “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” He thus plainly shows us, that the righteous when “absent from the body,” are not in a state of insensibility, but conversant with their Lord—in a situation where they enjoy a degree of communion with Him which they can not have while still in this state of probation. The Apostle did not indeed mean, that at death his spirit should at once pass into that Heaven to which his Lord had ascended, for in another place he speaks of “the crown of righteousness” being “laid up for him,” not to be bestowed until that Great Day when his Master should sit as “the righteous Judge,” and he should receive it in company with “all them also that love His appearing.” “The word ἐνδύμνησαι should be rendered”—says Dr. Bloomfield — “not *to be present with*, but (agreeably to the metaphor), *to be at “home with*,

implying communion with Him." Even while St. Paul was alive, he was with Christ, and Christ was with him, but the felicity for which he hoped at death was a nearer access to Him, and a greater communication of His favor. He should behold His glory, though not in that full brightness wherein it shall be seen at the day of His final appearing.

This brings us then to the question we would investigate. If the soul is to be in a state of consciousness when it has left the body, whither does it go? Where is its place of abode? This inquiry is best answered by considering the circumstances connected<sup>g</sup> with our Lord's death, since we are to follow in the same path in which He trod. Whither then did His soul depart? Can we believe (as Calvin asserted), that He went down to the place of torment, and there endured the pains of a reprobate soul in punishment?<sup>o</sup> The mind shrinks back with horror at

g. "It was necessary for him to contend with the powers of hell and the horror of eternal death..... Therefore it is no wonder, if he be said to have descended into hell, since he suffered that death which the wrath of God inflicts on transgressors. .... The relation of those sufferings of Christ, which were visible to men, is very properly

the thought, unsupported as the notion is by any intimation in Scripture, and directly refuted by our Lord's own declaration to his penitent companion in suffering. Did his spirit ascend at once to Heaven, and remain there during the three days which intervened before His resurrection? This could not be, for He afterwards said explicitly to Mary Magdalene — "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father." He remained forty days with His disciples upon the earth, before He departed visibly into Heaven. The necessary conclusion therefore to which we must come is, that He went to some place entirely distinct either from the Heaven of rest, or the prison of final torment. That place was Paradise, as He declared to the penitent thief — "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

What then did the Jews understand by Paradise? We reply—with them it primarily referred to the place of final torment, followed by that invisible and incomprehensible vengeance which he suffered from the hand of God; in order to assure us that not only the body of Christ was given as the price of our redemption, but that there was another greater and more excellent ransom, since he suffered in his soul the dreadful torments of a person condemned and irretrievably lost." *Institutes, Book ii, chap xvi, sec. 10.*



red to the Garden of Eden, where Adam dwelt in his state of innocence. But as this was a type of all that was pleasant and delightful, they used the same word also symbolically to represent that place of happiness in which the just await their resurrection. "Paradise" — says Parkhurst — "is in the New Testament, applied to the state of faithful souls between death and the resurrection." Hence it was the solemn good wish of the Jews, (as we learn from the Talmudists), concerning a departed friend, "Let his soul be in the Garden of Eden," or "Let his soul be gathered into the Garden of Eden." And in their prayers for a dying person, they were accustomed to say, "Let him have his portion in Paradise, and also in the world to come." In this form "Paradise" and "the world to come." are plainly referred to, as being two separate places and states of existence.<sup>h</sup> The same distinction is also made by St. Paul, when in speaking of different visions and revelations he had received, he mentions one in "the third Heaven," and another in "Paradise."<sup>i</sup> Dr. Doddridge, the celebrated Presbyterian divine,

*h.* Bishop Bull's Works. vol.i, p. 98.

*i.* 2. Cor. xii, 4, 6.

in his Family Expositor, thus paraphrases this passage — “ Such an one, I say, I did most intimately know, who was snatched up into the third Heaven, the seat of divine glory and the place where Christ dwelleth at the Father’s right hand, having all the celestial principalities and powers in humble subjection to Him ----- And I know that, having been entertained with these visions of the third Heaven, *on which good men are to enter after the resurrection*, lest he should be impatient under the delay of his part of the glory there, he was also caught up into Paradise, that garden of God, which is *the seat of happy spirits in the intermediate state, and during their separation from the body.*” To this place then it was that our Lord’s spirit went, and there He promised that His suffering companion on the Cross should be also.

“ Where’er Thou roam’st, one happy soul, we know,  
    Seen at thy side in woe,  
Waits on Thy triumph—even as all the blest  
    With him and Thee shall rest.  
Each on his cross, by Thee we hang awhile,  
    Watching Thy patient smile,  
Till we have learn’d to say, ‘ ’Tis justly done,  
Only in glory, Lord, Thy sinful servant own.’ ”  
j. Keble’s *Easter Eve*.

In the same way, while *Paradise* denotes that portion of the intermediate state which was allotted to the just, there was also a part in which the condemned awaited in misery the coming of the day of doom. This was known by the name of *Tartarus*. The general term for both these places was the Hebrew word *Sheol*, or as it is in the Greek, *Hades*, while the word *Gehenna* was used to signify the place of eternal torments after the resurrection.<sup>k</sup> By translating *Hades* therefore by the English word *Hell* in our Bibles, we often entirely obscure the meaning.<sup>l</sup> Such is

*k.* As the object of the writer is to give, if possible, a simple and popular view of this subject which is so little understood, a critical investigation of the meaning of these words would be out of place in these pages. The reader will find this examination carried out in Bishop Hobart's work on the state of the Departed.

*l.* "It is a great pity," — says Wall, (*Hist. Inf. Bap.* part II. chap. viii,) — "that the English translators of the creed and of the Bible, did not keep the word *Hades* in the translation, as they have done some original words which had no English words answering to them. By translating it *Hell*, and the English having no other word for *Gehenna*, (which is the place prepared for the devil and the damned),

the case with that passage in the sixteenth Psalm which refers prophetically to our Lord — “For thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell,” (that is in *Hades*, or the intermediate state), “neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.” This text indeed shows so plainly, that while our Lord’s body was in the grave, His soul was in some place called Hades, “that none but an infidel” —saith St. Augustin — “can deny it.” It is in Hades that Isaiah has placed that strange dramatic scene, which is found in the fourteenth chapter of his prophecies. As Homer in the *Odyssey* (lib. xxiv) sends the souls of the suitors to Hades, where they meet the spirits of Achilles, Agamemnon, and the other Grecian heroes they had known in life, the Hebrew prophet with the higher inspiration of truth, has given a description which for its inimitable grandeur nothing in the pages of classical antiquity can equal. He shows the proud King of Babylon, after he had been brought to the grave, entering *Sheol*, while the monarchs of the earth who had preceded him to the land of spirits, are poetically represented as rising from their seats at his approach, greeting him with bitter scorn—

than the same word *Hell* likewise, it has created a confusion in the understanding of English readers.”

“ Hades (*Sheol*) from beneath is moved because of thee, to meet thee at thy coming:  
He roused up for thee the mighty dead, all the great chiefs of the Earth:  
He maketh to rise up from their thrones, all the kings of the nations.  
All of them shall accost thee, and shall say unto thee:  
Art thou, even thou too, become weak as we ? Art thou made like unto us ?  
Is then thy pride brought down to the grave ; the sound of thy sprightly instruments ?  
Is the vermin become thy couch, and the earthworm thy covering ?  
How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning ?  
Art cut down to the earth, thou that didst subdue the nations ?”

*Bishop Lowth's translation.*

It is in Tartarus that the fallen angels also await their sentence. St. Peter tells us — “ God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell (*Tartarus*), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” And St. Jude says — “ The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great

day.” In Tartarus too was the rich man, while Lazarus was in Paradise. Dr. Campbell, another learned Presbyterian divine, and formerly Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen, says — “There is no inconsistency in maintaining that the rich man, though in torment, was not in *Gehenna*, but in that part of *Hades* called *Tartarus*, where we have seen already that spirits reserved for judgment are detained in darkness. . . . . According to this explication, the rich man and Lazarus were both in *Hades*, though in very different situations, the latter in the mansions of the happy, and the former in those of the wretched.”<sup>m</sup>

*m. Prelim. Dis. vi, part 2.* As the charge is often made against the Church, that she retains this *Popish* doctrine, we quote occasionally from distinguished Presbyterian writers, showing that they also have been forced to acknowledge its truth. On this point, no one is more explicit than President Dwight of Yale College. In his system of Theology, (*Sermon clxiv.*) he says — “*There can, I apprehend, be no reasonable doubt concerning an intermediate state.* St. Peter says of the angels that sinned, that ‘God cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.’ St. Jude also declares them ‘to be reserved,’ in like manner,

The manner in which the general judgment is always mentioned, may well confirm our belief in the doctrine of an intermediate state. When is there to be “rendered to every man according to his works?” When, in other words, is each one to reap his full retribution? Is it the moment he has passed the gates of death and put off this mortal body? This would be by no means in accordance with the declarations of Holy Writ. If we examine its promises, we shall

‘unto the judgment of the great day.’ From these declarations it is manifest, that fallen angels have not yet received their final judgment, nor, of course, their final reward. This, indeed, seems evident from the phraseology used by St. Peter, as well as by the declarations of both him and St. Jude. The word which is rendered from St. Peter, ‘cast them down to Hell,’ is in the Greek, *ταρταρωσας*; literally rendered, ‘cast them down to Tartarus.’ While this phraseology plainly declares a place of punishment, it indicates directly a different state from that, which is taught by the word *γεεννα*, (*Gehenna*,) the appropriate name of *Hell* in the Scriptures. After the rich man died and was buried, it is said by our Savior, ‘he lifted up his eyes in Hell, being in torments; in the Greek, *εν τω ᾠδη*, in Hades. . . . . The state, in which Lazarus was placed, is denoted elsewhere by the word

meet with no offer of perfect blessedness which is to be fulfilled before our Lord's second coming. He himself on one occasion declared — "Thou shalt be recompensed" — when? "at the resurrection of the just." The final reward of the righteous is always referred to the last day, at "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ" — "when Christ who is our life shall appear" — "when the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father,

*Paradise.* 'To-day,' said our Savior to the thief on the cross, 'thou shalt be with me in Paradise.' But we know from our Savior's own declaration, that when he gave up the ghost on the cross, his spirit went, not to Hell, but to *Hades* or *Sheol*. . . . . The thief therefore went to the state which is denoted by this word, and not to that which is denoted by *Heaven*, unless this world is supposed to include Heaven."

We might also bring forward the opinions of distinguished divines of other denominations. For example, John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Society, avows the doctrine clearly in his *Notes on the New Testament*. See on Luke xxiii, 43. 2 Cor. xii, 4. Rev. i, 18. Rev. xx, 15. So also one of his followers, Dr. Adam Clark. See in his Commentary on Heb. xi, 40, Rev. xv, 13, 14.



with His holy angels." Then it is that He shall recognize His faithful followers before an assembled universe, and receive them to reign with Himself in glory. It is not indeed until the solemn scenes of the judgment are over, that His own chosen Apostles will be admitted to that place, where they shall enjoy in its fullness, the presence of Him in whose footsteps they followed on earth. His declaration was—"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there you may be also." But the time of His promised return has not yet arrived. His followers therefore have not yet entered into their final rest, nor will they, until He "comes again to receive them unto Himself.

Still stronger is the inference to be drawn from that declaration of St. Paul—"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with

them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”<sup>n</sup> Here is an explicit account of the order in which each event shall take place at the last judgment. We learn from it then, that none have as yet entered into Heaven. If it were not so, but the just, as each individual soul passed from the earth, had gone at once to that place of glory, what meaning would there be in the Apostle’s declaration, that they which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent,” that is, anticipate, or go into Heaven before, “them that are asleep,” that is, the dead? This assurance certainly would be useless, if the departed at the hour of death, had each entered into his final rest. But the Lord must first descend from Heaven — then, the dead in Christ shall be raised — then, those who are at that time living on the earth, shall be caught up to meet their Judge — and then the army of the ransomed shall together go in to their reward. “And so,” that is, after all these things have taken place, “shall we ever be with the Lord.” What can be more clear than the order in which these events are here laid down.

In the Apocalyptic Vision, St. John represents

*n.* 1 *Thess.* iv, 15, 16, 17.

the ancient martyrs as resting in the Paradise of God, awaiting their reward until their brethren from the earth have joined them, that together they may enter the celestial city. "I saw under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."° Their happiness is incomplete. They are "under the altar" — not in the full presence of God, but in a safe and holy place. Their portion is not yet that of perfect bliss, but only of tranquility and peace. They are not serving God actively, as do the angels, but are at rest, awaiting their call to judgment and to Heaven. Anxiously do they look forward to the day which is to introduce them into the joy of their Lord, and therefore their inquiry is, "How long, O Lord, holy and true? But they are told, that they

must “rest yet for a little season,” until the circle of the martyrs is completed, and the number of the elect gathered in ; that thus, in the harvest time of the earth, all who had suffered in the great cause of man’s redemption—the sowers and the reapers in the world’s wide field—might all rejoice together. Yet in the meanwhile, to comfort them in this state of expectation, and as some little earnest of the promise, “white robes were given unto every one of them.”<sup>p</sup>

It is singular, that exactly the same idea is given in the Apocraphal Book of Esdras, where after the writer had made inquiry of the angel with regard to the mysteries of the world to come, he receives this reply—“Did not the souls also of the righteous ask question of these things in their chambers, saying, How long shall I hope on this fashion ? When cometh the fruit of the floor of our reward ? And unto these things Uriel the archangel gave them answer, and said, “Even when the number of seeds is filled in you”—that is, when the number of the elect is accomplished.<sup>q</sup>

*p.* See Newman’s Sermon on this passage, vol. iii, p. 399.

*q.* 2 *Esdras*, iv, 35, 36. Dr. Macknight, another

Another strong proof from Scripture is found in that mysterious declaration of St. Peter, with regard to our Lord — “Being put to death

celebrated Presbyterian divine, supports the same views. For instance, in his commentary on Heb. xi, 39, 40, he says — “The Apostle’s doctrine, *that believers are all to be rewarded together and at the same time*, is agreeable to Christ’s declaration, who told His disciples that they were not to come to the place He was going away to prepare for them, till He returned from Heaven to carry them to it (John xiv, 3). Further, that the righteous are not to be rewarded till the end of the world, is evident from Christ’s words (Matt. xiii, 40, 43). In like manner St. Peter hath told us, that the righteous are to be made glad with their reward at the revelation of Christ (1 Pet. iv, 13). John also tells us, that when He shall appear, we shall be made like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John iii, 2). *This determination, not to reward the ancients without us, is highly proper*, because the power and veracity of God will be more illustriously displayed in the view of angels and men, by raising the whole of Abraham’s seed from the dead at once, and *by introducing them into the heavenly country in a body, after the public acquittal at the judgment; than if each were made perfect separately at their death.*”

in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." Many attempts have been made to explain away this text, yet when carefully analyzed, its natural rendering seems to present a full confirmation of the doctrine of an intermediate state. The most masterly discussion of it is given by Bishop Horsley,<sup>r</sup> where he proves conclusively, that in its interpretation by the ancient Church, it was always referred to the descent of our Lord into the place of departed spirits. Let us then as briefly as possible follow his train of reasoning in the explanation of this verse.

The meaning of the whole passage turns upon the interpretation we give to the words "spirits in prison." "The invisible mansion of departed spirits"—says Bishop Horsley—"though certainly not a place of penal confinement to the good, is nevertheless in some respects a prison. It is a place of seclusion from the external world, a place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security, and hope, rather than enjoyment. It is a place which the souls of men never would

r. Horsley's Sermons, vol. ii, p. 86, serm. xx.

have entered, had not sin introduced death, and from which there is no exit by any natural means for those who have once entered. The deliverance of the saints from it is to be effected by our Lord's power. As a place of confinement therefore, though not of punishment, it may well be called a prison. The original word however in this text imports not of necessity so much as this but merely a place of safe keeping : for so this passage might be rendered with great exactness. *He went and preached to the spirits in safe keeping.* And the invisible mansion of departed spirits is to the righteous a place of safe keeping, where they are preserved under the shadow of God's right hand, as their condition sometimes is described in Scripture, till the season shall arrive for their advancement to future glory ; as the souls of the wicked, on the other hand, are reserved in the other division of the same place, unto the judgment of the great day. Now if Christ went and preached to souls of men thus in prison, or in safe keeping, surely He went to the prison of those souls, or to the place of their custody ; and what place that should be but the Hell of the Apostles' creed, to which our Lord descended, I have not met with the critic that could explain. The souls in custody, or in

prison to whom our Savior went in His disembodied soul and preached, were those which *formerly were disobedient*. The expression *formerly* were, or *one while* had been disobedient, implies, that they were recovered from that disobedience, and, before their death, had been brought to repentance and faith in the Redeemer to come. To such souls He went and preached."

The meaning of the sentence, "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," must also claim our attention. The word "Spirit" is here used in antithesis to the one translated "flesh." If therefore the latter refers, as it necessarily does, to that part of our Lord's nature on which alone death could take effect, that is, his body; the former must refer to that part over which the Destroyer had no power, that is, his soul. And as the word "quickened" is often used to signify, not merely a restoration of life which has been extinguished, but the preservation of life which then subsists, the Apostle's words may be well rendered — "Being put to death in the flesh, but quick in the Spirit," that is, surviving in His soul the stroke of death which His body had sustained, "by which," or rather "in which," that is, in which surviving soul, "he went and preached to the souls of men in safe



keeping.” Such is the rendering given by Mr. Polwhele in his *Essay on the State of the Soul after death*. “The original words” — he says — “are very strong and decisive. Literally signifying, ‘dead in His body’ — ‘lighted up with new life in His soul.’ Escaped from the burden of His mortal body, His soul was animated with a more ardent vivacity — was rendered capable of more powerful energies, and with a life thus kindled into a brighter flame, He went and preached to the spirits whose bodies had perished in the deluge.”

Another point with reference to this text remains to be inquired into — why are the antediluvians especially mentioned as being those to whom this preaching was addressed? Were not the souls of all who since their day had died in penitence, equally interested in our Lord’s message? “To this I can only answer” — says Bishop Horsley — “that I think I have observed, in some parts of Scripture, an anxiety, if the expression may be allowed, of the sacred writers to convey distinct intimations that the antediluvian race is not uninterested in the redemption and the final retribution. . . . It may be conceived, that the souls of those who died in the dreadful visitation of the deluge might from that

circumstance have peculiar apprehensions of themselves, as the marked victims of divine vengeance, and might peculiarly need the consolation which the preaching of our Lord in the subterranean regions afforded to these prisoners of hope."

Did He then publish those lofty doctrines of the Gospel, which now form the themes of His earthly ministers — the obligation of repentance and faith, by which the children of this world are summoned to their Lord? We answer, no — for He was not offering a new period of probation to the generation which died "in the days of Noah." Their condition for Eternity was settled, when the rushing flood overwhelmed them, and they perished amid the ruins of the Elder world. Yet might He not have proclaimed to those, who having died in penitence, had been thus waiting and watching for ages, that at length the mighty sacrifice was offered up — that He had finished the work of redemption — and was now going to plead as their Intercessor before His Father's throne? Might He not thus give assurance to the hope, to which for so long a time they had been cleaving? We see nothing improbable in the idea.

Such then is the analysis and rendering of

this passage, in which the most celebrated divines agree. If they have interpreted it aright, it proves most conclusively the fact of the descent into Hades. And through many ages of the Church, this text was relied upon as a principal foundation of this Catholic doctrine. St. Austin is stated to have been the first writer who ventured to doubt that this was the literal sense of St. Peter's declaration. In the Articles of Religion adopted at the Convocation held in 1552, the sixth year of Edward VI, and published by the King's authority in the following year, the third article is in these words — "As Christ died and was buried for us, so also it is to be believed that He went down into Hell; for the body lay in the sepulchre until the resurrection, but His ghost departing from Him, was with the ghosts that were in prison, or in Hell, as the place of St. Peter doth testify." When however, ten years later, in the fifth year of Queen Elizabeth, the Thirty-nine Articles were adopted in their present form, while Christ's descent into Hell, was still asserted, the proof of it from this text in St. Peter was omitted.<sup>s</sup> We think however, that the Church by setting forth this passage in the Epistle for Easter Even, seems to imply that

s. Bishop Horseley, vol. ii, p. 99

it should be rendered as referring to our Lord's soul, particularly as it is followed by the Gospel, which describes so clearly the condition of the other part of His nature.

We will present one more passage from Scripture. In Rev. xx, 13, 14, we find this description given of the conclusion of all things earthly—the final triumph of the human race over death—and the abandonment forever of the intermediate state. “And Death and Hell (*Hades*) delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hell (*Hades*) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” By this sublime personification it is clearly stated, that Death shall deliver up the bodies, and Hades the spirits which were subject to their dominion, and that then the latter shall be destroyed. Dr. Thos. Scott in his Commentary, has thus paraphrased this passage—“The grave, and separate state, will give up the bodies and souls contained in them, so that the whole multitude, which shall have lived upon earth . . . shall experience a reunion of their souls with their bodies. Then Death and Hell, the grave and the separate state (represented as two persons), will ‘be cast into the lake of fire;’ that

is, they shall subsist no longer, to receive the bodies and souls of men; there shall be no death in Heaven; and all the wicked will be cast into the place of torment, in which death and the separate state will be swallowed up: for ‘this is the second death,’ the final separation of sinners from God, without hopes of being restored to His favor, or delivered from His wrath.” Dr. Campbell (the same Presbyterian divine from whom we have already quoted), thus renders it — “The death which consists in the separation of the soul from the body, and the state of souls intervening between death and judgment, shall be no more. To the wicked, these shall be succeeded by a more terrible death, the second death, the damnation of Gehenna, *Hell* properly so called. Indeed, in this sacred book, the commencement, as well as the destruction of this intermediate state, are so clearly marked, as to render it impossible to mistake them. In chap. vi, 8, we learn that *Hades* follows close at the heels of death. ‘And I looked, and behold, a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell (*Hades*) followed with him.’ From this passage, in chap. xx, we learn also, that both are involved in one common ruin at the universal judgment.”

Such is a brief statement of the Scripture argument for this doctrine. We now pass on to the consideration, *that it has always, even from Primitive times, been an Article of Faith in the Catholic Church.* The learned Bingham explicitly declares it to have been the belief of the early Church, that “the soul is but in an imperfect state of happiness till the Resurrection, when the whole man shall obtain a complete victory over death, and by the last judgment be established in an endless state of consummate happiness and glory.”<sup>t</sup>

St. Clement, of whom the Apostle Paul speaks as his “fellow laborer, whose name is in the Book of Life,” thus writes in his Epistle to the Corinthians — “All the generations from Adam to this day, are past and gone, but they that have finished their course in charity, according to the grace of Christ, possess the region of the godly, who shall be manifested in the visitation of the kingdom of Christ. For it is written, ‘Enter into thy chambers, for a very little while, till my wrath and fury be passed over, and I will remember the good day, and will raise you again out of your graves.’”<sup>u</sup>

*t. Orig. Eccles. lib. xv, chap. 3, sec. 16.*

*u. Patres Apos. Cotel., vol. i, p. 276.*

Justin Martyr, who lived about the middle of the second century, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, among the Catholic doctrines taught him when he first became a Christian, delivers this for one — “That the souls of the godly, (after death till the resurrection,) remain in a certain better region, and unrighteous and wicked souls in an evil one.” And in the very same book he condemns as an error in the Gnostics, their holding the belief — “That as soon as they die, their souls are received up into Heaven.”

Similar to this is the testimony of Irenæus, who lived also in the second century. In arguing against some ancient heretics, who held, that when they died their souls went at once to Heaven, he urges against them the example of our Savior, “who,” says he, “observed in Himself the law of dead persons, and did not presently after His death go to Heaven, but stayed three days in the place of the dead. . . . . Whereas then our Lord went into the midst of the shadow of death, where the souls of deceased persons abode, and then afterwards rose again in the body, and was after his resurrection taken up to Heaven, it is plain that the souls of His disciples, for whose sake the Lord did these things,

shall go likewise to that invisible place appointed to them by God, and there abide till the resurrection, waiting for the time thereof; and afterward receiving their bodies, and rising again perfectly, i. e. in their bodies as our Lord did, shall so come to the sight of God.”<sup>w</sup> Again, in his fifth Book, he expressly distinguishes Paradise from the Kingdom of Heaven, and reckons it a lower degree of happiness “to enjoy the delights of Paradise,” than “to be counted worthy to dwell in Heaven.” But yet he acknowledges that the Savior shall be seen in both, “according as they shall be worthy or meet who see Him.” And he concludes the chapter with the declaration, “that those that are saved shall proceed by degrees to their perfect beatitude.” That is, that they shall, as St. Ambrose says, “through the refreshments of Paradise, arrive to the full glories of the Heavenly kingdom.”<sup>x</sup>

Tertullian, who lived at the close of the second century, calls Paradise, “a place of divine pleasantness, appointed to receive the spirits of the saints.”<sup>y</sup> He says also, “Heaven is not yet

w. Wall on *Inf. Bap.* part ii, chap. 8.

x. Bishop Bull, pp. 111, 112.

y. *Ibid.* p. 112.



open to any, the earth, or Hell, being yet shut, but that at the end of the world, the Kingdom of Heaven shall be unlocked.” Again — “All souls are in Hell (*Hades*), that there are both punishments and rewards, that both Dives and Lazarus are there, that the soul is both punished and comforted in Hell (*Hades*), in expectation of the future judgment.”<sup>z</sup> And even after he had fallen into the Heresy of the Montanists, he was obliged to admit this to be a Catholic doctrine, “that the good souls in that subterraneous region, do enjoy a happiness not to be despised, that they do in the bosom of Abraham receive the comfort of the Resurrection to come, that is, that they are at present in a state of rest and happiness, and live in a sure and certain hope of a greater happiness at the resurrection.”<sup>a</sup>

In the same way, the author of Questions and Answers to the Orthodox, (who is supposed to have lived in the fourth century,) in his reply to the seventy-fifth question, having said that in this life there is no difference as to worldly concerns, between the righteous and the wicked, immediately adds — “But after death, presently the

z. Lord King's *Hist. of Apos. Creed*, p. 114.

a. Bishop Bull, p. 113.

righteous are separated from the unrighteous. For they are carried by angels into their meet places. And the souls of the righteous are conveyed into Paradise, where they enjoy the conversation and sight of Angels and Archangels, and of our Savior Christ also by way of vision : according to what is said, when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord. But the souls of the unrighteous are carried to the infernal regions, &c. And they, (that is, both sorts of souls), are kept in their meet places till the day of the Resurrection and recompense.”<sup>b</sup>

Novatian, in the third century, says — “ Those places which lie under the earth, are not empty of distinguished and ordered powers ; for that is the place whither the souls both of the godly and ungodly are led, receiving the forejudgment of their future doom.” Lactantius, of the same century, says — “ None should think, that souls were immediately judged after death ; for they are all detained in one common custody, till the time shall come when the greatest Judge shall examine their respective merits.” Hilary, in the middle of the fourth century, says — “ It is the necessary law of nature, that bodies should be

*b.* Bishop Bull, p. 123.

buried, and that souls should descend into hell, where they are reserved for an entrance into the Heavenly kingdom by the custody of the Lord, to wit, in the bosom of Abraham, unto which a great gulf hinders the wicked from approaching.”<sup>c</sup> Such indeed is the uniform testimony of the Fathers of the early Church. They believed not that the departed had already entered into the perfect bliss of Heaven, but, (in the words of St. Chrysostom,) “that they will not be crowned before us, God having appointed one time of coronation for all.”

On this doctrine also were founded, those Commendatory Prayers for the dead, which were used in the ancient Liturgies. These, known by the names of St. Peter’s, St. James’s, St. Mark’s, (or St. Cyril’s,) and St. John’s Liturgy, were used in the Oriental Churches, and, as has been shown by Mr. Palmer, in his *Antiquities of the English Ritual*, are undoubtedly the four original forms from which all the Liturgies in the world have been taken. “They resemble one another too much to have grown up independently, and too little to have been copied from one another.” One point of correspond-

c. Quoted in Lord King’s *Hist. of Apos. Creed*, p. 214-15-16.

ence is, that each of them has a prayer in the Communion Service, “for the peace of all those who have departed this life in God’s faith and fear,” concluding with a petition for communion with them. A portion of this prayer was in these words—“We commend unto Thy mercy, O Lord, all other Thy servants, which are departed hence from us with the sign of faith, and now do rest in the sleep of peace: grant unto them, we beseech Thee, Thy mercy and everlasting peace; and that at the day of the general resurrection, we, and all they which be of the mystical body of Thy Son, may altogether be set at His right hand, and hear that His most joyful voice, ‘Come unto me, O ye that be blessed of My Father, and possess the kingdom which is prepared for you from the beginning of the world.’ Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ’s sake, our only Mediator and Advocate.” This prayer was retained in the Liturgy in “Edward VI’s 1st Book,” but altered in the 2d, at the instigation of Bucer and Calvin. This was probably done, as Mr. Palmer conjectures, because these prayers were so connected in the minds of the common people with the idea of purgatory, that their continuance would have involved the risk of propagating this pernicious error. As

remodeled, the prayer in our service now stands thus —“ And we also bless Thy holy name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear ; beseeching Thee to give us grace to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom.”

We do not pretend to discuss the propriety of these prayers ; we only mention their existence in the ancient Liturgies, as furnishing a proof of the belief of the Church in the state of Paradise after death. “This custom ” —said the learned Bishop Collier —“ seems to have gone on the principle that supreme happiness is not to be expected till the resurrection ; and that the interval between death and the end of the world, is a state of imperfect bliss.”<sup>d</sup>

Thus it is then that the Church has inherited this truth, and so she has retained it. Her third Article is —“As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also it is to be believed, that He went down into Hell ;” while in her creed she teaches her children ever to confess —“He descended into Hell ;” inserting in the margin, by way of explanation, “He went into the place of departed spirits.” In the same way she recognizes the

*d. Eccles. Hist. of Great Britain, Part II, Book iv, p. 257.*

doctrine of the intermediate state in all her public offices. She never speaks of the fullness of joy as something to be attained by the Christian immediately after death, but looks forward to it with hope, as a consummation to follow the second coming of our Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment of the last day. Thus in the collect for the first Sunday in Advent, we pray, that "when Christ shall come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal."

In the Burial service, as we might naturally expect, we find a plain distinction made between the rest we are to inherit at death, and that which is to be our portion at the last day. For instance, in one of the concluding prayers, we entreat the Father, "that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Him; and that at the general resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in His sight, and receive that blessing which His well beloved Son shall then pronounce to those who love and fear Him, saying, Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." Here, two separate times and two distinct rewards are mentioned. In the same way, in one of the other prayers,

after speaking of "those who have finished their course in faith," as "now resting from their labors," we are taught to look forward to a still higher stage of felicity to which they may reach, and therefore pray — "And we beseech Thee, that we, with all those who are departed in the true faith of Thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory."<sup>e</sup>

Again — another argument in support of this doctrine is derived from *its being so evidently in accordance with reason*. A belief indeed in the immediate entrance of the soul into its full reward or punishment is one which necessarily leads us into inextricable difficulties.

Each individual passes through his probation here, a compound being, the earthly and the spiritual united by a chain, the links of which we can not discover, though we daily and hourly

*e.* This prayer in the service of the Church of England is even more explicit, where the petition is offered to God, "of His gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of His elect, and to hasten His kingdom: that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of His holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul."

feel the influence of one part of our nature upon the other. The material and the immaterial sin and suffer together. Tempting and being tempted, they go through life — the spirit by its imaginings urging on its sluggish partner to action, while the body by the outward senses trammels down the soul, to become “of the earth, earthly.” Participating in the same acts, and deserving of the same recompense, should they not be united before they fully enter on that state of bliss or woe which is to be unchanged through eternity? Can we indeed conceive of any retribution which will fitly reward man for all his doings here, if it does not act upon both parts of his nature? Can he fully rejoice or suffer, while existing as a purely spiritual being, in this state of separation? Can we believe therefore that he will receive his final sentence — or that there will be any use in pronouncing it — until he stands before the throne, the same he was in every respect, while living a probationer here? Why then should he enter into his final state before that hour arrives?

Again — supposing that he does pass at once into Heaven or Hell, judgment in that case must be pronounced upon him as soon as his spirit leaves the body. Must not then the process of finally acquitting or condemning the disembodied



souls which each hour are winging their flight to the eternal world, be ceaselessly going on? This would indeed entirely set aside the general judgment of the last day, unless we can suppose the absurdity, that now the spirit is judged, but then the body alone will stand up for retribution. For what could it be but an empty show, to recall from Heaven the countless tribes of the just after they have been glorified there for ages, and then once more to return them to that abode, with the sentence, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord!" Bishop Sherlock, in his "Practical discourse concerning a Future Judgment," sums up this argument in a single sentence — "And the truth is, if all men have a final sentence passed on them, as soon as they go into the other world, it is very unaccountable, why Christ at the last day shall come with such a terrible pomp and solemnity to judge and *condemn* those, who are judged, and condemned, and *executed* already as much as they can ever be." But the plain teaching of scripture is, that there shall be a day at the end of the world, when not only the unnumbered multitudes of the human race, but also the apostate angels who are "reserved in chains" against that solemn hour, shall together receive the sentence which all eternity can not

reverse. Our Lord is now represented, standing as Mediator before the throne of His Father, and not until the mighty drama of this world is entirely concluded, will He ascend the tribunal of judgment.

Neither, on the other hand, can it be argued, that this admission to a state of rest merely and imperfect bliss, would in any way forestall the judgment of the last day, or that the solemnities of Christ's tribunal would be rendered vain by that previous knowledge of our destiny, which must be gained from our intermediate state. "The condition of one who dies in his sins, and awakes to a sense of the retribution that awaits him, may, not inaptly, be compared to that of a criminal who is committed to a gaol for trial, without the slightest hope of escaping conviction. It could hardly be said of such a person, that his fear and anguish there would forestall the solemnities of justice, and render nugatory the subsequent administration and execution of the law. The forms and proceedings of earthly justice do not indeed, provide a precisely similar illustration to the case of those who have persevered in well doing ; but nevertheless, we are unable to comprehend, why the analogy should not likewise be extended to them. What is there unreason-

able in the surmise, that a righteous man may awaken from death to that full assurance of acquital and acceptance which some have affirmed to be attainable even in the present life? Why may he not be placed in a state of which the enjoyment shall consist in the knowledge that his trials and agitations are at an end, that the forgiveness of his sins is finally sealed, and that a reward will at some period be assigned him, proportioned to his faithfulness, by the infallible wisdom and goodness of his Judge?" *f*

How natural then seems the order of events, when we adopt the belief of an intermediate state! New light is thus poured upon many a passage of Scripture, while every difficulty which was suggested by the reason, at once passes away. There we behold the departed, resting in their separate mansions, through all the ages which intervene between the hour of death and the final consummation of all things. In peace the just repose, for the cares and sorrows of this lower world have passed away forever, and in the full assurance of hope they look forward to that hour, when their "Lord shall be revealed from Heaven," and they be admitted to the fulness of joy, in the "place which he hath pre-

pared for them.” There also, yet separated by “a gulf which they can not pass,”<sup>g</sup> are the wicked. The record of a wasted life is ever before them, for already conscience has commenced her work, and they feel the gnawings of that worm which dieth not forever. In trembling and fear therefore, they await the revolution of that cycle of ages, and the coming of that day of decision, when they shall be forced to descend to a deeper, more awful state of torment. Thus it is, that the general judgment becomes, as Scripture represents it, the winding up of this world’s history. There, the descendants of Adam, of “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,” meet for the last time — they are “judged for their works” — the final separation is made — and they pass away, to begin their endless retribution.<sup>h</sup>

*g. Luke, xvi, 26.*

*h.* It will be at once perceived, that this doctrine is widely different from the belief of the Romanists in Purgatory. Their doctrine is, (as given in their own words) — “Some there are, though I fear but few, that have before their death so fully cleared all accounts with the Divine Majesty, and washed away all their stains in the blood of the Lamb, as to go straight to Heaven after death; and such as those

A single question more remains to be answered. It is the inquiry, *What was the object of our Lord's descent into the place of departed Spirits?*

One end answered by it was, *that in this respect also He conformed Himself to the lot of those whose nature He had assumed.* When He left "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was," it seems to have been His purpose to become "like unto us in all things, sin only excepted." He passed through every trial to which frail humanity is subjected. His were, the feebleness and pains of wailing in-

stand not in need of our prayers. Others there are, and their numbers are very great, who die in the guilt of deadly sin, and such as these go straight to Hell, like the rich glutton in the Gospel, St. Luke, xvi, and therefore can not be bettered by our prayers. But besides these two kinds, there are many Christians, who, when they die, are neither so perfectly pure and clean, as to exempt them from the least spot or stain, nor yet so unhappy as to die under the guilt of unrepented deadly sin. Now such as these the Church believes to be, for a time, in a middle state, which we call Purgatory; and these are they who are capable of receiving benefit by our prayers." *The Catholic Christian instructed. By the Most Rev. Dr. Challoner.*

fancy — the cares which gather around the years of manhood — the shrinking of nature at the sight of death — and the last convulsive struggle which bursts the prison-house of clay. And even when He entered the gates of the grave, He continued to tread the same path in which each one of us — his brethren after the flesh — must one day walk. His body was committed to the tomb, after a time to be awakened again as an incorruptible and spiritual body, freed from all human infirmities, and then to pass into the Heavens. And for the same reason must His soul also abide in the resting place of those He came to redeem, until the hour in which it was to be once more united with His body. Thus it was, that the humiliation of the Son of God was not confined to this world. It did not end with the agonies of the Crucifixion. It continued even after He had passed the veil which separates the living from the dead. As a disembodied spirit, He found that he must still acknowledge brotherhood with mortals from the earth.

Again — *our Lord thus proved to us the certainty of our victory over Hades.* We point to the resurrection, and say, “Thus it is that we know we also shall triumph over the grave. He hath burst the band of Death asunder, and with

the like power shall His people also be gifted." This it is, which sheds a glory around the tomb, and lights up its gloomy caverns with a celestial radiance.

But would not the work have been incomplete, if no pledge had been given us of the Spirit's victory in the invisible world — if our Master had neglected to point out the path which it also was to tread, in the interval between death and the resurrection?" But "He hath done all things well." Nothing was left unaccomplished. His grace was displayed even in the mansions of the departed, and to us therefore they are divested of all terror. "His soul was not left in Hades," neither shall His children be forever detained there. He now "has the keys of Hell (*Hades*) and of Death," and shall release them when the appointed hour comes, that they too may ascend as He did, to the "fullness of joy."

And may we not add also, that another object of His descent was, *that He might there proclaim the news of His redemption to the spirits which were in safe keeping?* We have already alluded to this, when discussing that difficult passage in St. Peter, and stated what must have been the manner of His preaching. There, the righteous had rested for ages, in anticipation of that future

atonement which was to be wrought out by the Son of God. Is there any thing strange then in the idea, that when that ransom had been paid, which secured their salvation, and the power of their great Enemy was forever broken, He should descend and unfold these glorious tidings to the countless myriads of the redeemed? While on earth, they had looked forward with the anticipation of hope, and “rejoiced to see that day” even through the mist of intervening centuries; but now, these visions were realized and the Messiah Himself proclaims, that “it is finished.”

“The passage in St. Peter, which speaks of Christ as having ‘preached to the spirits,’ gives we think” — says an eloquent living writer — “something of foundation to the opinion, that whilst His body was in the sepulchre, Christ preached to spirits in the separate state, opening up to them, probably, those mysteries of redemption into which even angels, before-time, had vainly striven to look. The kings, and the prophets, and the righteous men, who had desired to see the things which apostles saw, and had not seen them, and to hear the things which they heard, and had not heard them — unto these, it may be, Christ brought a glorious roll of intelli-



gence ; and we can imagine Him standing in the midst of a multitude which no man can number, who had all gone down to the chambers of death with but indistinct and far-off glimpses of the promised Messiah, and explaining to the eager assembly the beauty, and the stability of that deliverance which He had just wrought out through obedience and blood-shedding. And, oh, there must then have gone forth a tide of the very loftiest gladness through the listening crowds of the separate state ; and then, perhaps, for the first time, admiration and extacy summoning out the music, was heard that anthem, whose rich peal rolls down the coming eternity, ‘Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb.’ Then, it may be, for the first time, did Adam embrace all the magnificence of the promise, that ‘the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head ;’ and Abraham understand how the well-being of the human population depended on one that should spring from his own loins ; and David ascertain all the meaning of mysterious strains, which, as prefiguring Messiah, he had swept from the harp-strings. Then too, the long train of Aaron’s line, who had stood at the altar, and slain the victims, and burnt the incense, almost weighed down by a ritual, the import of whose ceremo-

nies was but indistinctly made known — then, it may be, they were suddenly and sublimely taught the power of every figure, and the expression of every rite ; whilst the noble company of prophets, holy men who ‘ spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,’ but who, rapt into the future, uttered much which only the future could develop — these, as though starting from the sleep of ages, sprang into the centre of that gorgeous panorama of truth which they had been commissioned to outline, but over whose spreadings there had rested the cloud and the mist ; and Isaiah thrilled at the glories of his own saying, “ unto us a child is born. unto us a son is given ;” and Hosea grasped all the mightiness of the declaration, which he had poured forth whilst denouncing the apostasies of Samaria, “ O Death, I will be thy plagues ; O Grave, I will be thy destruction.”

We know not why it may not thus be considered that the day of Christ’s entrance into the separate state was, like the Pentecostal day to the Church upon earth, a day of the rolling off of obscurity from the plan of redemption, and of showing how ‘glory, honor and immortality,’ were made accessible to the remotest of the world’s families ; a day on which a thousand

types gave place to realities and a thousand predictions leaped into fulfillment; a day therefore, on which there circulated through the enormous gatherings of Adam and his elect posterity, already ushered into rest, a gladness which had never yet been reached in all the depth of their beatifical repose. And neither, then, can we discover cause why Christ may not be thought to have filled the office of preacher to the buried tribes of the righteous, and thus to have assumed that character which he has never since laid aside, that of 'a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.'"<sup>i</sup>

This then is the doctrine of the Intermediate state. Comfortable indeed to man in his feebleness is the thought, that even in this respect his Lord hath prepared the way for him! The path which connects this world of toil and sorrow with one of songs and gladness, has been clearly pointed out. It is still radiant with his Master's footsteps, and His followers may tread it without fear. And if, when all things are bright before him, he realizes this but feebly, yet to him also there must come "a time to suffer and be silent," when spiritual promises alone will be

i. Melvill's *Sermons*, vol. i, p. 49.

able to satisfy the intense longings of his soul. As man journeys onward through an evil world, the glory of this lower life fades away — its hues of beauty disappear — and are lost at last as the clouds gather around his setting sun. Beautifully indeed does one of England's Christian poets portray this change which passes over all things, thus weaning the Spirit away from this earth, and disposing it to look to Heaven.

“ Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon thē growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy ;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel still, is Nature's Priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.”*j*

Such is truly the sorrowful process of man's life. One by one the objects in which he had garnered up his affections pass away, until often in the gray twilight of his days he is left alone

*j.* Wordsworth's *Ode* — “Intimations of Immortality from recollections of early childhood.”

and desolate. Then indeed if he look around for sympathy, from the busy, earnest world about him there comes forth no response. Orestes-like he seeks for peace with a deeper yearning than that suppliant in the ancient Grecian Drama,<sup>k</sup> yet he seeks in vain. The flowers of his earthly Paradise are faded, and its cisterns broken. Memory lifts up her voice within him, like the archangel's trump, summoning from their forgotten graves, thoughts and scenes which long since had passed away. Their images rise up mournfully, as it were to mock him, for he knows that the reality can never return. For him is reserved only the lonely night, which stealing insensibly on, is ever deepening its shadows about his path.

When therefore this world thus vanishes away and life by its own vicissitudes has taught him the lesson of his vanity — when nothing but evils seem to “choke Time's groaning tide” — how cheering is the thought, that the future yet remains to be his certain heritage! He raises his eyes above the gathering darkness and the clouds which surround him, and beholds beyond them, that land which is always radiant with a celestial glory. The past, with its sorrowful memories, is forgotten, and he lives only in the anticipations

<sup>k</sup>. Æschyl. Eumen.

of the future. He is not driven forward to the coming world without "knowing the things that shall befall him there." He is sustained by the "hope which maketh not ashamed." And thus he passes along through the remaining days of his pilgrimage, sharing in that spirit which the old artists attempted to embody in their delineations of Faith when they represented her treading a rugged and thorny road, yet clasping the Cross to her heart, and her eyes intently fixed upon the calm, clear Heavens above. He feels that Death shall only come like the Angel to the Apostles, bursting the bars of his prison house, and leading him forth to the light and to the day. His spirit pines within him for the sweet waters of the River of Life. The voices of the dead too, who have gone before, come solemnly to his ears, as they urge him to press onward to the promised land. There, his wanderings shall end, and the pilgrim staff be forever cast aside. There he shall be at peace in the mansions of rest, with the mighty army of patriarchs and apostles, and confessors and martyrs, who have already slept in the faith. Cheer-ed by a brighter manifestation of his Master's presence than can be his lot in this world, he shall await his full reward, and the crown which

shall be given him at the last day. With what unwavering confidence may he then look up and say —

“Soon wilt Thou take us to Thy tranquil bower  
To rest one little hour,  
Till Thine elect, are number'd, and the grave  
Call Thee to come and save:  
Then on thy bosom borne shall we descend,  
Again with earth to blend,  
Earth all refin'd with bright supernal fires,  
Tinctur'd with holy blood, and wing'd with pure  
desires.

Meanwhile, with every son and saint of Thine  
Along the glorious line,  
Sitting by turns beneath Thy sacred feet  
We'll hold communion sweet,  
Know them by look and voice, and thank them all  
For helping us in thrall,  
For words of hope, and bright examples given  
To show through moonless skies that there is light  
in Heaven.”<sup>l</sup>

Thus ages shall glide by, until the history of this world is completed, and the number of the elect made up. Then, our long expected Lord shall descend with a shout—the dust of each one

*l. Keble's Easter Eve.*

of the saints be collected from the four winds, united again to its former partner, as the spirit comes forth from its resting place, and all shall gather around the throne of Him whom they followed while on earth, ready to receive the sentence—"Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." This shall be the GREAT EASTER OF THE EARTH.











